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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[IN SPITE OF FATE.]

## CECIL'S FORTUNE.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### TYRANNY AND VENGEANCE.

But Kate, the bonniest Kate in Christendom.  
SHAKESPEARE.

Who is that lady? Cecil asked the question in a species of alarm, for in another moment the Countess of Belgrave entered the room. How superb the woman looked in her Genoa velvet of rich amethyst hue, and her diamonds and amethysts, splendid antique gems reset, which had belonged to the earl's great grandmother, but were almost priceless heirlooms in the family of the Ormonds on account of their lustre, brilliancy and hardness.

The countess was as cold, as hard, as handsome as her diamonds. She flashed a look of disdain upon Pomfret impossible to express in words, and then she stared haughtily at Cecil Renfrew.

"I will die sooner than betray Lady Kate," the young man said to himself, and yet while he thought thus, and while his heart swelled with a wild ecstasy at the idea that Kate cared enough for him to lay a plot to enable them to converse together, he yet was sensible of a feeling akin to disappointment that the lovely heroine of his love, the queen of his soul, as he reverently called her in his heart, should as it were have stepped off her pedestal to make an appointment with him.

Was she a coquette who only wanted to trifle

with his heart and enjoy his torments? Because after all she was to marry the French marquis, and yet he said to himself that he would suffer his tongue to be cut out rather than he would allow Lady Belgrave to guess that Kate had been guilty of any indiscretion. Lady Belgrave flashed upon him a very supercilious glance, and then she spoke, and what she said filled him with a new sort of horrified yet ridiculous rage and surprise, while it relieved him for the moment of any fear that peerless Kate had come under the angry suspicions of her imperious mother.

"I ought perhaps to apologise for my unceremonious entrance to your room, Mr. Secretary," she said, contemptuously, "but I have always been remarkable for my well conducted household. I pride myself upon the propriety of my dependents" (had she but known how both the secretary and the lady's-maid each hated her in their different ways for the galling words)—"I pride myself upon the propriety of my dependents," said Lady Belgrave, "and Mansell my housekeeper having seen Pomfret enter your sitting-room, Mr. Secretary, where you are supposed to be supping, at this unseemly hour, hastened to tell me of it. I am a person of action, a person of measures. I never beat about the bush, but I go straight to my object at once, and my object is to reprimand you both very severely. If I were not acquainted with some of Pomfret's family, and if I did not know her to be respectable, I should dismiss her at once, but as for you" (the countess again looked at Cecil with a disdain it is impossible to translate into words)—"as for you," said Lady Belgrave, "you have only one alternative—engage yourself to marry Pomfret in a year from

this date, or the earl will dismiss you in the morning."

"Madam," cried Cecil, and his dark face glowed with a fiery indignation, "your being an English countess gives you no right to insult me or treat me like a cur. I will resign my situation to-morrow if the earl wishes it."

The countess of Belgrave hated Cecil Renfrew, and the reason of this hatred was a mystery to herself; she had no real reason for it. But nevertheless there was something in her intensely haughty, tyrannical nature which was quite antagonistic to some element in his. From the first moment when Cecil had entered the box of the countess during the alarm of fire at the theatre, something within her had risen up and desired to crush and smite the young man to the earth.

She was wholly at a loss herself to account for this strangely combative feeling. She would have said had anyone asked her why she so hated the young secretary, "that a person of that sort was not worthy of her dislike." But notwithstanding this terrible and haughty spurning of those beneath her, which was a distinguishing characteristic of the Countess of Belgrave, she did detest Cecil Renfrew quite as cordially as if he had been a nobleman in her own charmed circle of the *crème de la crème* who had opposed her wishes, thwarted her will, and was therefore worthy of her dislike.

The real truth may have dawned upon her even at this early period of her acquaintance with Cecil—namely, that instinct warned her of him as one ordained by destiny to thwart her ambition and defeat her most cherished schemes.

Cecilia Pomfret had as in duty bound risen

when the countess entered, and all the while that the angry war of words was going on between her lady and the secretary, her dark eyes were cast upon the ground meekly and demurely, so it seemed, but anybody who had taken the trouble to study her countenance would have seen by the twitching of her lips what demons of scorn and hate were at work within her own heart, and Cecil, whom she had hitherto liked, she henceforth hated for the horrified surprise he had manifested when the countess asked him if it was his intention to marry her.

"I am the maid, Mr. Cecil Renfrew, am I?" she said to herself. "Well, we will see what the maid can accomplish, and when the antecedents of the said maid are known, when you understand who she is, and what position she intends to occupy—"

Suddenly the countess turned round upon Pomfret.

"Pomfret, I have always considered you a respectable girl. I knew something of the good people who brought you up in a remote Yorkshire village, where your uncle was a miller, and where you attended the national school and progressed so well that you became a pupil teacher, and then your aunt ventured to write to my housekeeper to know if there was anything I could do for you; and I took you into my service as under maid to my maid Gray, and after that you became Lady Kate's maid. You have been in my service ten years; you were a child in your teens when you entered, and during all that time I have never suspected you of impropriety until now, and now I will not blame you if you tell me the truth, that you are engaged to this young man, or that he had led you to suppose that he has a preference for you."

Pomfret gave a quick glance of inquiry at Cecil; she read nothing on his stern, fine face but a displeased grand and majestic as would have suited an angry noble; certainly if in trying to get out of the scrape she ventured to insinuate that he had ever had the remotest thought of her, he would contradict her flatly. Then her ready wit came to her help, and she said:

"I have never spoken to Mr. Renfrew before, and I suppose that he never even knew of my existence until to-night, but Mr. Renfrew has a distant cousin called Frank Aveland who made me an offer of marriage when I was away on a visit to my friends in the north last autumn, he is an artist, a landscape painter. I did not exactly promise to marry him, but I arranged that we should correspond, which we have done regularly; and yesterday I had a letter from Frank in which he tells me that his cousin is secretary in the same house with me, and he asked me to ask Mr. Renfrew to take charge of his picture, the one which has not been accepted this year at the Academy; it has to be sent to his former lodgings in Keppel Street. I forgot all about it till to-night."

Cecil stood aghast at the woman's daring; she looked the countess straight in the face while she was telling this false story, and nobody would have doubted the truth of her statement, she spoke with so much boldness and candour; neither could Cecil have contradicted her statement since he had a very distant cousin—a certain Frank Aveland—who was an artist, whose one picture had been accepted and one rejected at the Academy that year, but how the maid had become acquainted with these facts remained a mystery.

"It is nevertheless a most improper proceeding," said the countess, "and I blame you both very much. Walk out of the room this instant, Pomfret."

The countess pointed haughtily to the door: the demons of hate and rebellion and deadly malice, and an envious fury the mystery of which the countess dreamed not of, struggled for a time in the angry soul of Pomfret. Words, burning words, were on her tongue, which, if uttered, would have made the haughty lady quail and totter where she stood—for Pomfret held the key of a deadly secret; she was a conspirator who had it in her power to undermine the countess and her great position, and per-

chance to scatter it and all its grand belongings to the four winds of Heaven; but Pomfret had, after all, graduated in the school of adversity, and she had therein learnt that world wisdom which is so priceless to those who desire to live in the world and to prosper in it.

For a moment after the haughty command was given she hesitated, but only for a moment; immediately after that hesitation she bowed her dark head meekly and went out before the countess, who thus intimated her command over her young serving woman. Once outside in the hall Lady Belgrave swept past her maid.

"Follow me to my room," she said.  
"Just as if she were ordering a dog," muttered Pomfret to her own heart; "but patience, my day is coming."

It is the night of that grand fancy dress ball which is to be given by the Duchess of Berryland, at her great house in Park Lane. All the celebrities of the day—poets, painters, politicians, all the flower of the nobility, all the wit and beauty and fashion—are expected to be present. The society papers will have a hundred things, good or ill-natured, to say about it in the morning; dancing is to commence at ten o'clock.

It is now nine, and Lady Kate stands dressed as Lady Jane Gray in her mother's chamber. What of that daring scheme planned by Pomfret her maid, which if carried out ordains that in the great ball-room of the great duchess, she, Lady Kate, is to wear the simple dress of the young-enthusiast, Charlotte Corday, who slew Marat, the tyrant, in his bath; not the elaborate attire of white velvet and cloth of gold, the long waisted stomacher, ablaze with rubies, real rubies, family heirlooms of the Ormonds—not the peculiar Marie Stuart head-dress of that period, but a dark green riding-habit, a large straw hat, a white lawn fichu.

But Lady Kate loves adventure. She is at heart a little madcap. The excessive severity and propriety of the countess-mother have made the girl run into the opposite extreme. Burnt at heart as any white lily, she yet loved to do strange daring things so long as they were not unwomanly or immodest.

She had, strange to say, still faith in the faithless Pomfret. She even loved her in spite of her cruel conduct a week or two back, and now Pomfret had laid a plot which was to give her the fun of appearing like somebody else, eluding the eyes of her mother, and escaping for a time the rather overwhelming attentions of the French marquis, who at this time believed himself seriously—nay, desperately in love with the young English girl whose beauty had created quite a furore at the Drawing-room of the Princess of Wales.

Lady Kate held her mask in her hand. "She made a perfect Lady Jane—fair and wise, and calm and sweet, and slender and graceful as we all imagine her, and perchance when she reflected on the severity of those parents of the Lady Jane she may have said to herself:

"There is more resemblance between us than in the mere matter of dress—"

Lovelier than all fancy phantoms,  
Lovelier than all songs have sung—  
Puppet of a tyrant will,  
And coward of a shrewish tongue."

Strange words! They are emblazoned in letters of gold surrounded with flowers. Lady Kate holds it in her hand—a fan, exquisitely designed in gold and colours on ebony, and the verse quoted above ran along it when the fan was open. It was a present made her at hazard by her father, who had not read the lines, but Kate read them now and wondered vaguely if her mother was really acting a tyrant's part in forcing her into marriage with this French noble.

"I do not love him, but I do not hate him," murmured Lady Kate. "On the other hand I do not love Cecil Renfrew either—not yet. I will not allow my heart to love him, because it would only lead to misery; but it is like holding in a restive horse to say to this heart of

mine, 'You must not love him.' Let me forget him if I can. I shall not see him again, I hope, until long after I am married."

We have allowed the reader to learn the thoughts of lovely Kate's secret heart, and thus it will be seen that when Pomfret told Cecil that Kate wished to meet him at the ball she was telling a most wicked falsehood.

Lady Kate had not the very remotest idea that the secretary was to appear at the ball in the borrowed garments of her mother's first cousin, Sir Ralph Sullivan, whose dress and character were to be those of a court gallant of the time of Louis the Sixteenth, just before the first outbreak of the great French Revolution. She knew that Sir Ralph was prevented from coming, that his rich masquerade dress was locked up in a certain wardrobe in an upper chamber, but she had no idea of being recognised by any one person who should appear at the Duchess of Berryland's ball.

Presently the countess entered. It is well known that at fancy balls all kinds of incongruous characters belonging to times divided by many centuries mingle together, and this grand ball of the duchess was no exception to the rule which marks these kinds of entertainments.

Thus the handsome countess chose to appear as that glorious Queen Bess, who did not reign in Marie England until years after beautiful Jane Gray lay headless and murdered in her early grave. The countess made a superb Queen Elizabeth. She was blazing in jewels. Her enormous ruff stood up round her white shoulders and swelling bust.

Her still abundant yellow hair was dressed high, and on her head was the cap of the period stiff with pearls and emeralds. She too carried a gorgeous fan. She looked and felt every inch a queen. She gave her fair child a bland, complacent smile.

"The marquis is going as Lord Guildford Dudley," she said. "I have just seen him in the drawing-room. The dress is superb."

"We should both have worn mourning," said Lady Kate, suddenly. "We ought to have dressed as if we had been going to the scaffold."

"What a perfectly absurd idea," cried the countess. "This ball ought not to be associated with mourning or the scaffold. You are supposed to be Lady Jane during the first days of her marriage with poor Lord Guildford. The marquis looks enchanting in his ruff and short velvet cloak, and with his rapier by his side."

Lady Kate was wicked enough to make a little grimace which the countess did not see. There was a want about the brilliant marquis, a ring of unreality in his highest flown compliments.

"I am to be his wife," she said to herself, "and I mean to be a good one, but I fear I shall never love him as I had dreamed of loving."

Lady Kate Ormond looked at her watch. In another quarter of an hour the carriage would arrive which was to convey her with her parents and fiancée to the ball of the duchess. How on earth then was that transfer of costume to be effected from which she expected such infinite fun and amusement?

At that moment Miss Pomfret came into the room graceful and supple as a snake in her long glistening dress of black silk. She was pale from suppressed excitement.

"Lady Kate," she said, "I have forgotten the fastenings of that underskirt, and if you tread on it it will come down. Oh, pardon me, I am so fearfully nervous. Ah, if I had your ladyship alone for five minutes I would rectify all, and without disarranging your coiffure, but oh, I am so nervous I must have you alone."

"What a superlative simpleton you have become, Pomfret," said Lady Belgrave, with scornful anger. "I shall lose all patience with you and send you back to your Yorkshire village if you don't take care, and I certainly shall never recommend you to another family, you nervous, ridiculous creature. Is it this love affair with the cousin of the secretary that is turning your brain? I really think if you forget yourself in this way we shall have to take

out a certificate of lunacy and send you to an asylum for the insane."

And then the countess swept out of the room. Pomfret shut the door, turned the key in the lock, then shook her clenched fist in the direction which the countess had taken. Oaths she muttered between her close shut white teeth, but the next moment she turned round and began to unfasten the richly embroidered robe of the fictitious Lady Jane Gray.

Another moment and it lay in a heap on the floor. Next she took the jewelled cap from the head of Lady Kate, then she pointed to the bath-room.

"Run in there," she said; "lock yourself in, and put on the dress of Charlotte Corday which hangs behind the door. Dress carefully, for you there is abundance of time, and the lamp is left burning."

Madcap Lady Kate rushed into the room and locked the door as the maid whom she so weakly trusted commanded, and meanwhile that maid had taken off her black silk dress and white cap, and had assumed in an incredibly short space of time the rich attire of a great lady of the sixteenth century.

She stood before the large cheval glass and smiled at herself. She was, after all, there was no denying the fact, a fine-looking dark girl, erect and slim, and when she chose to assume it she had the stately hauteur of a queen.

"Ah, and I shall be for one night at least in my true position," she said to herself. "I shall go to this ball and I shall mix with those who are my equals. I shall hold up my head with the best of them, as I mean to do some day—yes, when I have my rights."

Then with a smiling face she put on a pair of white satin boots embroidered with scarlet and gold, which she had carried in the pocket of her dress, for the boots of Kate Ormond were, she said, "half a mile too small for her." Then she covered her dark crafty young face with a black velvet mask, and so unlocked the door and went out into the corridor with an unconcerned air, playing with the splendid fan of Lady Kate.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### LOVERS' TALK.

Love seems all rules,  
Of wisdom's schools,  
And men are fools  
Whom Cupid leads them.

"Then that idiot, Pomfret, managed quite easily about the skirt after all?"

It was Queen Elizabeth who spoke to Lady Jane. Let us thus designate the countess and the false maid for the present evening.

"Yes, I really think there is something very queer about Pomfret. I shall not wish to have her for my maid when I am married unless she improves wonderfully."

Lady Jane had one gift in perfection, that of mimicry; she could imitate almost any human voice, even those of men, when their tones were not too deep, and her imitation of the Lady Kate was simply perfection. Indeed, there were those who affirmed that Miss Pomfret's natural voice in speaking was something like the Lady Kate's. The thought of doubt never entered the proud head of the countess, but she said:

"Why need you wear that hideous mask in this house; it will make your face so hot. Take it off."

"I have a slight faceache," said Lady Jane, sweetly and calmly, "and the warmth does it good."

Just then the earl and the marquess entered the drawing-room to say that the carriage was waiting at the door, and the marquess, in his character of the Earl Dudley, came and offered his arm to his expected bride.

Lady Jane was very clever—wonderfully clever, but she trembled a little when the marquess began to whisper burning love words into her ear, for she knew that the eye of love and the ear of love are both quick to a miracle, and she dreaded that he would detect the impos-

ture; but she was so thoroughly artful, she flattered him in such soft whispers, she was so enchantingly coquettish and piquant and pleasing, and above all, her French accent so marvellously good when the marquess spoke in his own tongue and she replied that no shadow of doubt crossed his mind for hours.

"Madcap Kate Ormond. Yes, that is after all the name I deserve. I am more than half sorry I entered into this absurd scheme. I should not have thought of it if it had not been for Cissy Pomfret."

Then Lady Kate took down from behind the door that quaint costume of the young doomed enthusiast who at the end of the last century, during the grim days of the terror, when death held high revels, and the streets were red with the blood of the noble, the young and the brave, went calmly to her death on the scaffold amidst the howlings of a brutal mob, who afterwards would fain have raised a statue to her memory and wreathed it for all time with immortelle flowers.

"There is something very grotesque in this choice of a character for me which Pomfret would make me fancy that I have chosen for myself," said Lady Kate, softly. "This Charlotte offered herself up as a sacrifice, and I too am to be a sacrifice on the altars of worldly wisdom, worldly pride, and the worship of gold. Well, well, I suppose I shall be after all as happy as anybody else if I only do my duty, and I mean to try, although I am a madcap. Certainly it is odd to think that at this very moment that artful Pomfret is dancing in my dress and under my name at the greatest ball in Europe this night. I thought it fine fun when she first proposed it, but now I fail to see the fun of it. It seems to me a dreary thing, after all, to be left at home to follow alone to the ball like a thief in the night, or like a Cinderella disenchanted, while my maid goes on to the entertainment in the robes of a princess, and I must wear this ugly imitation of the dress in which poor Charlotte killed Marat."

It was not in truth a pretty dress; it was such as history reports the unfortunate Charlotte to have worn on the morning of the assassination—a dark green cloth dress, cut like a riding-habit, fastened with buttons of the same, a white lawn fichu fastened behind, a large straw hat.

Lady Kate attired herself, then walked into her own room and made grimaces at herself in the glass. The large hat hid the plaits of her glorious hair, but could not conceal the radiant beauty of the fair face beneath it. Lady Kate was, however, coquettish in the matter of shoes, hose, and gloves. She wore black silk stockings with golden clocks, black satin boots with diamond buckles and very high heels, and long black kid gloves on her exquisite hands. She carried in her hand a dagger in a sheath.

"Not a sharp one," she said, taking it out. "No, but somehow I don't like it in my hand. That horrible old witch told me the other night that she was sure some day I should commit a murder? How those wicked, ridiculous words haunt me. Now here is my purse, there is my cloak, not so heavy as the fur one I lost. I must go to the end of the street where the cab is waiting for me, and desire to be driven to the Duchess of Berryland's."

In five minutes more Lady Kate Ormond stood in the street. She was wrapped from throat to heels in a long black cloak. On her head was the peculiar hat of the last century. Fortunately it did not rain. The May night was fine, and if the breeze was chill the stars shone brightly.

Lady Kate hurried on, and found the cab at the corner of the square as her maid had promised. She jumped in.

"To the Duchess of Berryland's in Park Lane," she said.

Then she leaned back and was driven off. The twinkling lights, the moving panorama of London by night passed before her like a dream. She knew that on arriving at the mansion she would have to send in her private card, a false

one, to the hostess professing to be a Madame le Claire, the daughter of a certain French clairvoyant, then resident in London, in whom the duchess was interested.

Pomfret had ascertained from the maid of the said lady that she was too ill to attend the ball, and Pomfret had offered to post the letter of refusal, instead of which she burnt it. Thus Lady Kate felt tolerably safe when she arrived before the courtyard of the magnificent house. All the windows were ablaze with flowers. Numbers of carriages lined the way.

There was a great crowd of people assembled, more or less respectable, to see the great people alight in their gorgeous or fantastic dresses, and Lady Kate had on her black mask when she sprang lightly to the ground amid the crowd. She was received with a cheer.

"As light as a feather," said a rough voice in the crowd.

"Ah, and if she would let us see her pretty face we'd thank her all round," said another voice.

Lady Kate was alarmed and feared some rude familiarity. Hitherto when she had arrived at the doors of her aristocratic friends tall liveried servitors had assisted her to alight, and had kept the crowd in awe. Now she arrived, a young lady alone in a cab wrapped from throat to heels in a long black cloak, and wearing an oddly-shaped hat and a black mask.

Nobody, however, attempted to molest her, and she entered the gates, crossed the court, ran up the steps, and walked into the hall; the door stood open, the whole of the interior was brilliantly lighted, footmen in gorgeous liveries lounged about in various attitudes.

On the right hand was a bank of flowers, on the left rose the grand white marble staircase, made in Rome and brought over step by step by the grandfather of the present duke. Right facing the slim Charlotte Corday as she advanced were a pair of curtains of crimson Genoa velvet, with cornices and fringes of gold.

She had been once or twice before in this Park Lane mansion, and thus she knew her way, so she approached the curtains, which were immediately drawn a little aside by two powdered and plumed servitors.

"Name and card, if you please, madam."

"Madame le Claire," said Kate, producing a card of the French lady which the craft of Pomfret had provided her with, and another servitor preceded the visitor to the ante-room, where a maid stepped forward and took off the cloak of Lady Kate, and then she stood in her quaint dress with her black mask hiding her face. Another moment and a third footman bowed her forward, and behold Lady Kate enters the whirl and glitter of that ball-room which was the talk of London for nine days.

It was a ball which some of the more radical of the society papers found great fault with on the score of a reckless and selfish extravagance, while so many were starving in our midst. It was a ball which the "Court Journal" praised and lauded for the exquisite taste of its arrangements, for the beauty and stately bearing of the guests, for the sheen of their silks, and the dazzling lustre of their jewels.

Lady Kate took the first seat that offered, and stared through the eyelet holes in her mask at the fairy-like scene. The walls were of pure white marble, with arabesque borders to each panel in golden flowers, fruits, and winged loves. The ceiling was a masterpiece of some Venetian master, and represented the loves of Cupid and Psyche; the drapery was pale green satin, embroidered with gold. The couches and chairs were covered with the same; the carpet was richest Axminster of a crimson hue, strewn with pale green leaves and ferns.

At the end the room opened into a huge conservatory, or, rather, winter garden, where the rarest exotics bloomed, tall, feathery palm trees rose to the lofty crystal roof; birds of the tropics sang amid the branches, and marble fountains—each one a masterpiece representing a Dryad, a nymph, or a demigod—played fantastically and gracefully; while there was neither band nor orchestra seen, but music floated about as if by magic—the loveliest airs, the most entrancing

waltzes; it was like the enchantment of a fairy palace.

As for the assemblage, Lady Kate was very glad to see that every individual was masked, thus since to wear masks was the strict rule of the entertainment nobody would or could remark upon her as being singular in continuing to wear hers.

All kinds of costumes were there, most of them rich, gorgeous, or fantastic; most of them graceful, a few exquisitely poetical. Lady Kate was sorry that her own dress was so little picturesque; the ugly hat, the plain green cloth dress, cut like a riding habit; certainly that could not hide the marvellous grace of her exquisite form.

But still, there were so many brilliant fairies and stately queens and allegorical nymphs floating about in the mazes of the dance that the tall, slight, unattended figure in green passed unnoticed for a long time, and Lady Kate was quite unaccustomed to remain unnoticed. All at once she caught sight of her maid Pomfret, attired in the rich dress which had been prepared for herself, the grace and ease with which the maid walked, leaning on the arm of an attendant cavalier, struck her as something startling and unique.

Pomfret, who was this maid, who spoke French with so perfect an accent, who walked like a duchess, who seemed to hate her with so strange and deadly a spite? How was it that, after all, Kate should have been so weak as to fall into this trap which her maid had laid for her, and should have consented to wear an ugly dress and come unattended to this ball—for fun! While Cecilia Pomfret danced and partook of the dainties, and received the attentions and wore the jewels.

"It is all a trick, and I hate it," said Kate, at length, passionately, to herself. "I have the very greatest mind to go to my mother and tell her the truth and get Pomfret turned away."

But her better and truer nature soon spoke up in the noble heart of Kate, which showed her that such a proceeding would be mean, paltry, and beneath her, and yet we, who tell this story, can safely say that had Lady Kate managed to get rid of her enemy Pomfret it would have been better for her future peace. All at once Lady Kate perceived the stately Lady Jane Gray of the fancy ball approaching her, another moment and she stood by her side, and whispered to her:

"Go into the conservatory, take the second turn on the left, and you will come to a fountain of white marble representing Diana and her nymphs, it is the one that the duchess bought at Florence and gave ten thousand pounds for it, and is surrounded with palms, exotics, azaleas, and there are numbers of tropical birds flying about—there, you can't miss it. You will meet a friend who is dying to speak to you."

Away floated Lady Jane without waiting for the answer of Charlotte Corday, and then Lady Kate arose, hastened on nimble feet to the conservatory, and was not long in finding her way to the marble fountain. The water sparkled with a hundred colours in the lamp-light.

By the side of the fountain stood a court gallant of the time of Louis the Sixteenth; in a moment Lady Kate recognised the dress of her mother's cousin, Sir Ralph, who had been prevented from attending the ball. She started in amaze, she had believed that costume to be hanging safely in a great wardrobe in the Grosvenor Square mansion. The gentleman was masked.

"Whatever brought you here?" she said, impulsively.

And then she recollected that as this cousin Ralph was kindness itself, fifteen years older than she was, and fond of fun, he would certainly keep her secret and sympathise with her, but she wondered why Pomfret had confided in him, and so she resolved to keep up her character of Charlotte Corday, and to address him as if he were indeed a court gallant of the old régime, imprudent enough to wear his gay garments in time of the terror.

"Are you not afraid to venture to Paris in this time of danger, and in those foolish garments of

a past and foolish time? The guillotine spreads out her cruel arms, blood flows like water, the aristocrats bite the very dust, not only the worthless but the true and the good are sacrificed."

"Thanks for your gentle care for my safety," answered a deep, rich voice, the tones of which fair madcap Kate Ormond knew well, and which vibrated to the very core of her heart: Cecil Renfrew, whose image she strove in vain to banish, Cecil Renfrew! but still what audacity was the next thought in the heart of Lady Kate.

"I will not pretend to know him," she said to herself, so she answered, "I take an interest in all who suffer, in all who are in danger."

"If I mistake not your name is Mademoiselle Charlotte Corday?"

"Yes; but yours, I have yet to learn."

"The Comte de Charnier."

"Then, if that is so, you must drop your title and wear plainer clothes if you would walk the Paris streets in safety."

But the heart of Cecil was too full to keep up the farce any longer.

"Lady Kate," he said, "a thousand thanks for your condescension in granting me this interview. Pardon me, is it not cruel waste of time for us to speak to each other in the characters of those who have been long dead, when we are alive and full of mad hopes and fears?"

There was intense passion in Cecil's tones, believing, as he did, that Kate had planned this meeting; he was frantic with love and impassioned gratitude.

"How did you know I was here in this disguise?" asked Kate, in a tremulous voice. "And how did you contrive to gain admittance?"

"I—I followed your directions as your maid told me."

"My maid?"

In a moment the whole scheme was revealed to Kate—it was a plot of Pomfret's to bring Cecil and her mistress together. How was it that she could not feel as angry with the maid as she ought to have felt? How was it that to stand thus, even thus, under the great branches of the tropical trees, with the birds flying, the water of the fountain plashing, and the music sounding from a distance, seemed like a dream of Paradise to lovely Kate Ormond.

"I know nothing of it," she whispered. "Pomfret has deceived us both, but, after all, I am not angry."

He seized her hand and kissed it passionately.

"Give me a rose from your bouquet," he said, "I will keep it till I die!"

(To be Continued.)

## FACETIÆ.

### A (K)NEEDED CURE.

MICK: "Well, Pat, an' what are ye standing gaping at now?"

PAT: "The legs of the shintleman as just passed, Mick. An' wasn't I thinking how much better would it be for him to tuck up his trousers and let them fight it out."

("The shintleman as just passed" was badly knock-kneed.) —Judy.

### PRACTICAL.

YOUNG LADY VISITOR (reading the parable of the Prodigal Son): "And he would fain have eaten of the husks that the swine did eat."

SMALL BOY (to teacher): "Why did he not kill one of the pigs?"

(Young lady visitor much shaken.) —Judy.

### IMPLICATION.

YOUNG LADY: "Why, James, you're spoiling that hedge!"

GARDENER: "Ah! Tummas Lapham, he come along this mornin', an' he says to I, says he,—'Why, James, thee beist a spilin' thik hedge!' 'Thee beist a big loiar,' says I,

'Tummas! The more thee do trackle an' cut thomes hedges, the better they be!'" —Punch.

### LES PREMIERS BEAUX JOURS.

SHE (newly-married, and doing wonders in the housekeeping department): "And do you know why the tea is so good? Because I put a tiny pinch of soda in the pot. Pray, sir, before you were married, did you ever put anything in your tea?"

HE: "Yes; I used to put a little brandy." (Violence.) —Judy.

### WHO'S LARK-ING?

MARY: "Oh, what a shame! A bird's nest! That's some boy's work, I'm sure."

TOMMY: "Boy's? No, it's not; it's a thrush's!" —Fun.

### TO MY LOVE.

ALTHOUGH, dear maid, thy beauty

rare

Would tempt a stoic soul to woo

thee,

'Tis not alone that thou art fair

That warms my loyal heart unto

thee.

The brightness of your azure eye,

The honeyed sweetness of thy

kisses,

At Time's command, alas! will fly,

Mute in the wake of other blisses.

But when thy dear eyes dim have

grown,

Thy golden locks with silver

sprinkled,

When age hath dulled thy voice's

tone,

And care that snowy brow hath

wrinkled,

Still love for thee my heart shall fill;

The rose smells not less sweet for

crumpling;

And age shall find thee able still

To make me steak and kidney dump-

ling.

—Judy.

### ASSOCIATIONS.

"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever,"

So warbled Keats;

While shirking duty is considered clever

On peeler's beats.

Such thoughts are coupled in one's

teeming brain,

When, nightly wandering, we observe

with pain

Rows round the corner; Robert court-

ing Jane.

—Fun.

### "SUAVITER IN MODO."

PRINCE B.: "But I say, Granville,—how about 'ascendency,' eh?"

EARL G. (blandly): "Well, Prince, we shan't call it by that name." —Punch.

### HONOUR WHERE HONOUR IS DUE.

SIR GORGIOUS MIDAS (who has not been made a peer): "Why, it's enough to make a man turn radical, 'anged if it ain't, to think of sich services as mine bein' rewarded with no 'igher title than what's bestowed on a hement saw-bones, of a hingerneer, or a littary man, or even a successful hartist!"

MRS. PONSONBY DE TOMKYNs (sympathetically): "It does seem hard! But you've only to bide your time, Sir Gorgius. No man of your stamp need ever despair of a peerage!" (And Mrs. Ponsonby de Tomkyns is, as usual, quite right.) —Punch.

PROVINCIAL BYE-LAWS.—At Shrewsbury recently a most absurd bye-law has been enforced against a proprietor of a circus. The bye-law says: "Every person who shall on the Lord's Day, commonly called Sunday, lead or drive into or through any part of the borough any beast, cattle or poultry, waggon or cart, laden or unladden, shall be fined in a penalty not exceeding £5."



[A STORY OF A LIFE.]

## HER HUSBAND'S SECRET.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Frank Bertram's Wife," "Strong Temptation," &c., &c.

### CHAPTER III.

#### PARTED FOR A WEEK.

But pleasures are like poppies spread,  
You seize the flower, the bloom is shed;  
Or like the snowfall in the river—  
A moment white, then melts for ever.

BURNS.

EACH member of the family at the Towers received Mr. Ashley's mandate in a different fashion: Sir Reginald deemed the summons simply an insult, particularly the clause which stated his betrothed was to go alone.

"It is preposterous," he declared, angrily. "Why should you spend a week shut up with a grim old lawyer because he happens to be your guardian? Any business he may have to arrange could be settled in one interview."

The marchioness was annoyed at the wording of the request.

"I don't like it, Rose," she said, quietly, to the girl when they stood alone in her pretty boudoir. "Surely Mr. Ashley does not think we have forced you into this match."

"I shall tell him you have done no such thing," smiled the happy girl. "I shall tell him nothing in the world could bring me so much joy as to be Sir Reginald's choice. I must run away now. Georgie, Lord Desmond told me to go to him in the library directly after breakfast."

She found her guardian awaiting her with a graver look than she often saw on his kindly face.

"Rosamond, do you know that you are a great heiress?"

"Yes," a little awed by his gravity, "they always said at Brighton I should be very rich."

"From the day you came to us, that is from the moment you were eighteen, you came into a fortune of a hundred thousand pounds; it is absolutely your own and under your own control."

"Yes," simply.

"My dear, I think from the tone of Mr. Ashley's letter he imagines my wife and I have set to work to gain your fortune for her brother. Rosamond, the idea is very painful to me, it almost makes me regret Sir Reginald's choice."

"Don't say that," implored the girl, looking at him wistfully with her clear eyes. "Oh, don't say that, no one could think such a thing; he is Sir Reginald Dane of Allerton, and I—I am nothing but Rosamond."

The marquis was touched by her distress.

"It is for this reason I consider we are bound to carry out Mr. Ashley's wishes to the letter, Rosamond; we shall all be sorry to lose you, but I think you ought to go to him to-morrow."

"Yes," feeling as if he had just pronounced her exit from Eden. "I will go."

"You will soon come back to us, to be yet more one of ourselves. I am very glad to think your father's child has been happy in my house."

"Did you know papa well, Lord Desmond?"

"We were like brothers once. I knew your mother, too."

"She died long before papa?"

"Yes, it was her death made him reckless; he plunged deeper and deeper into speculations until ruin came. I would not tell you this only you may some day learn it from harsher lips. Your father never held up his head after his failure; he died of a broken heart."

The girl sighed, then her eyes gazed at the marquis with an eager question in their depths.

"Lord Desmond, it was only misfortune, was it? People could not blame my father."

"No one could blame him justly, Rosamond, you may be very sure of that."

And she was not versed enough in business, nor experienced enough in the world's ways, to wonder how she, the daughter of a ruined man, came to be an heiress. The rest of the day was devoted to her lover; they wandered together through the park, they enjoyed the sweet beauty of the spring sunshine, and no thought of coming trouble fell on either. Never once did it occur to them that aught could prevent their marriage.

She loved him—ah, Heaven! how much!—with the deep purity of a girl's first love, and he admired her grace and beauty, and felt proud that both were to adorn his home. He thought he had for her a calm, placid affection, he did not know he loved her with what was to be the master-passion of his life—did not guess that waking and sleep her face was to haunt him for all time.

"You will be back in a week, Rosamond. I shall come and fetch you myself."

"Seven whole days! Rex, if you had gone abroad I think I should have died."

She had no hesitation in confessing her love; she was not one to give things by halves. Having promised to be this man's wife she saw no shame in letting him see how entirely, how perfectly he filled her whole heart.

"You will love me always, Rosamond, my beautiful garden flower?"

"Always, in life and death."

"Do not talk of death," he said, hastily; "darling, don't you know that is the one thing love cannot bridge over?"

"Love can outlive death," answered the girl, dreamily. "No, Rex, I think the one thing that kills love is disappointment."

"Disappointment," not understanding her meaning in the least; "but, my darling, life is full of disappointments, all cannot be golden days."

"No," looking at him with perfect trust, "I

did not mean that, I did not mean trouble. I think if one were disappointed in someone we loved we should leave off loving altogether, the love would die."

"Then you expect perfection, little one?"

"Not perfection, only truth."

"And I am happy, I have truth and perfection, too, at least I shall have when I take my beautiful blossom to Allerton."

"You love Allerton very much, don't you Rex?"

"I love it as my own life, the Danes have always done so."

"It is your kingdom," she whispered, sweetly.

"My kingdom of which you shall be queen." He took her hand in his and held it caressingly. Never man with voice or manner more likely to win a woman's heart than handsome Rex. "Rosamond, what token shall I give you of your bondage? If you are going away to-morrow I shall not have time to choose a golden circlet for this little finger."

"Don't give me anything, Rex."

"But, dear, you must have a ring. Will you wear this?" and he touched one he wore on his little finger, "until I can secure one more worthy of the future Lady Dane."

She shook her head.

"I am afraid of snakes, Rex. Those diamond eyes would haunt me. No, I'd rather not have a ring. What do you and I want with tokens? We have each other."

"What a strange fancy, Rosamond. Won't you let me give you anything?"

"Yes," with a blush. "Give me a flower, Rex."

She thought he would have gone to the conservatory and gathered one of her namesake roses. Instead he stooped and picked a lovely white hyacinth which grew near, and whose delicate waxen petals had charmed his eye. The girl took it unresistingly. Then a sad look came to her face.

"Oh, Rex, you should not have given me that; it is so unlucky."

"My dear child, why?"

"Don't you know," with a blush, "a hyacinth means certain trouble, perhaps death."

Sir Reginald took the flower from her and ground it to pieces under his heel, then as he looked at her frightened face:

"Surely you are not superstitious, Rosamond?"

"I am a little," with a half sigh. "We had a French teacher at Brighton who believed firmly in omens, and I think I picked it up from her."

"Foolish child," stroking her hand fondly; "and so you believed whatever you were told. Pray did this French lady ever tell your fortune?"

"Oh, yes," with a crimson blush.

"And what was it," smiling at her embarrassment. "Now, young lady, I insist upon hearing. You are not going to escape me."

"She said I—I should be married before I was twenty-one."

"Most oracular of women. Of course, anyone could tell that. A face like yours is not likely to be left 'withering on the stalk.' Well, you will be married before you are nineteen. Pray did she give you a description of the happy man, and do I at all correspond?"

"Not the least in the world," laughing this time in spite of her confusion. "He was to be very grave and sad, Rex, and to have large blue eyes."

"And the immense amount of suffering crowded into my thirty years has not sufficed to make me grave and sad. I don't at all do for the hero of the romance, Rosamond."

"You do in one respect. You were to give me a title."

"Do you like your title, Rosamond?"

"I should like any name you gave me."

"Rosamond Dane. The names suit well."

A silence crept over them. The shadow of separation had already fallen upon them. A nameless sadness suddenly attacked Rosamond. Looking at her Reginald saw she was in tears.

"What is the matter, my darling?" putting

one arm round her and drawing the bright head down to rest on his shoulder. "What makes you cry?"

But she answered nothing, only clung the closer to him and sobbed on as though her heart would break.

"Look up, Rosamond. Don't you know you are grieving me? My darling, what is the matter?"

She looked up then, her face wet with tears, which yet could not dim her beauty. She raised her eyes to him, but she did not answer him.

"Are you regretting how very far short I fall of the ideal her promised you?"

"No. Oh, no."

"We shall never get at the truth like this. Once more, Rosamond, what is the matter?"

The commanding voice was not to be disobeyed. Rosamond was one of those creatures who delight to bow to a stronger will.

"Rex, could Mr. Ashley separate us?"

The same question had occurred to Sir Reginald Dane, and been discussed between himself and Lady Desmond long before he asked Rosamond to marry him: so he answered with a firm sense of conviction.

"Nothing in the world can separate us but our own wish. By your father's will you came of age at eighteen. You are your own mistress, and no one in the world can take you from me unless you wish to be taken."

"I shall never wish that, Reginald."

A shade of remorse came to him. She was giving him so much. He could offer her so little.

"Rosamond, do you know I am a shockingly bad match for a young lady of your pretensions? Do you know, child, match-making mamma would tell you you were throwing yourself away?"

She laughed merrily.

"And I should tell them to mind their own business, and that I should do as I liked."

"You know I am a poor man, Rosamond, while you are an heiress."

"I shall wish I was not an heiress if you tell me the fact so often. Seriously, Rex, I wish sometimes I was quite poor. It would be so very nice to live in a cottage covered with roses. I would milk the cow, and you should see to the garden. Wouldn't it be nice, Rex?"

He smiled without sharing her enthusiasm.

"I confess I should not care to make the experiment. I am glad my wife will have every comfort at her command."

"Then you think people are happier for being rich?"

"Immensurably happier, Rosamond."

That was their last tête-à-tête. The next morning soon after breakfast the marchioness drove with the two lovers to the station, then she and Rosamond went up to London. This was Lord Desmond's wish. He did not like his ward to travel alone, he would not allow her to do so under Reginald's escort, and being desirous not to meet Mr. Ashley, he sent his wife.

"How do you feel, Rose?" asked the marchioness, merrily, when they were fairly on their way. "You don't seem half so miserable as Rex. I am sure he looked a monument of woe standing on the platform."

"I wish it was over. Oh, Georgie, you can't think how glad I shall be to come back to the Towers."

"Not a bit more glad than I shall be to have you, Rosamond," and her voice took a serious ring. "Reginald is the dearest thing on earth to me after my husband and child, and hardly after them. He is the last of our name, the very last Dane of Allerton. To see him married has been my one anxiety for years."

"I wonder you like him to have me," said Rosamond, humbly. "I wonder you do not grudge me the title of Lady Dane."

"It will be a happy day for me when you bear it, dear."

They reached the terminus in good time; then they went through a marvellous amount of shopping. Finally, late in the afternoon, Lady Desmond drove to a handsome house in Bedford

Square, and ascertaining that Mr. Ashley was within, took her leave, and Rosamond, with a strange misgiving at her heart, followed the page through a large hall, up a broad old-fashioned staircase, to the drawing-room. She had always believed her second guardian to be an unmarried man, but now she found she must have been mistaken, for as the page announced "Miss Keith" a middle-aged lady, dressed in soft grey silk, and with a sweet, gentle face, came forward to meet her, saying:

"My husband will be here directly. He came home early on purpose to welcome you, Miss Keith."

Rosamond took an offered chair with a sense of relief. How she had dreaded this visit only she herself knew. The Desmonds had unconsciously or purposely strengthened her dread. They had talked to her of grim chambers and musty offices until she had really believed Mr. Ashley had no other home. The spacious apartment where she sat was, in its way, as tasteful and luxurious as the rooms at the Towers. Mrs. Ashley's face already won her heart. Miss Keith decided she might have been very happy with her second guardian but for the absence of her lover.

"It is very good of you to come to us so promptly," said Mrs. Ashley, gently. "I dare say you were sorry to leave Lord and Lady Desmond."

"They have been very kind to me."

"I have seen Lady Desmond's picture in the Academy. She has a very sweet face."

"Yes."

"You were to have been presented this spring."

"I think."

"Yes," with a deep blush, "but that is altered now."

"I hope you may be very happy, my dear," said the elder lady, kindly, "though you are very young to be married."

Rosamond felt relieved that her engagement met with no stronger condemnation. The door opened and Mr. Ashley entered. He went straight up to Rosamond and took both her hands in his.

"Welcome, my dear," he said, warmly. "I am very glad to see you."

It flashed on Miss Keith what a strange arrangement it had been that neither of her guardians should have been allowed to see her during her childhood since both had received her so kindly since. She was quite prepared to dislike the solicitor, but as she looked up into his open face, and met the frank, though keen, scrutiny of his brown eyes, she felt all her prejudice melt. Mrs. Ashley proposed that she should take off her things, and led the way to a pleasant bedroom.

"I hope you may be comfortable," she said, as she left her young guest.

There was an unceremonious dinner at seven o'clock. Mr. and Mrs. Ashley were simple, unaffected people, and cared little for show and grandeur. The solicitor gave his arm to his ward. Mrs. Ashley followed with a young man of three or four-and-twenty, whom she introduced to Rosamond as her son. Conversation flowed easily enough. Mr. and Mrs. Ashley mentioned several places their guest would enjoy seeing. Hatred made but few remarks, but his eyes wandered often to Rosamond's face.

"You may be easy, father," he said, when the ladies had retired. "Men do not desert such a beautiful creature, even when they discover she is penniless."

"Hem! You think, then, she will give up everything."

"I am sure of it; she must have a keen sense of honour, judging from her face."

"And Sir Reginald Dane is a poor man, over head and ears in difficulties; he may love the girl and want her as well as her money, but really I don't see how he can afford to marry a poor wife."

"When shall you speak to her?"

"Not yet, poor girl, let her have another day's happiness. I will never be guardian to anyone else as long as I live."

"I thought your one anxiety was lest she should wish to keep her fortune."

"Really, Harold, you can be very provoking. I was anxious then for poor Keith's memory, I am uneasy now for his child's happiness."

But Harold opined there was no need. When they went to the drawing-room and he saw Rosamond Keith in her pure white dress, knots of purple violets at her throat and in her soft hair, he decided that the man who had won her love must be beneath contempt if he had wooed her for what she had, not what she was.

His mother asked her to sing, and she complied at once without any excuses or deprecation. She struck a few melodious chords before, in a rich soprano voice, she began the dear old Scottish ballad, "Robin Adair." The exquisite pathos, the intense feeling she compressed into the simple words told Harold one truth: her whole heart was in her engagement—without Sir Reginald she found no more happiness than the heroine of the song had done without "Robin Adair."

"I wonder if he is worthy of her," thought the young man, a little sadly. "I daresay not; women generally throw themselves away on some fellow utterly unable to appreciate them. Well, I should like to have the handling of him if he dims the brightness of those eyes."

And with this warlike reflection Harold carried his father's ward a cup of coffee and took a chair at her side.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### A STORY OF THE PAST.

For seldom shall she hear a tale  
So sad, so tender, and so true.

SHENSTONE.

THREE days later Rosamond, congratulating herself that half her separation from Reginald had passed, came down to breakfast as blithe and gay as a singing bird. There was a letter for her from her lover; the whole world seemed full of sunshine for her: she did not notice that Mrs. Ashley looked at her with a strange expression of pity, and that her guardian cleared his throat once or twice ominously before he said:

"I want to have a little business conversation with you, my dear."

He led the way to his study and placed a chair for Rosamond, but he was so long before he spoke that the girl grew uneasy.

"There is no bad news from the Towers, is there, Mr. Ashley—you have not heard from Sir Reginald?"

"I never heard from Sir Reginald Dane in my life. I was thinking of one I liked better, nay, loved as a brother—your father."

She looked at him with ready interest.

"Has it never occurred to you, Rosamond, that as your father died a poor man it is very strange you should be an heiress?"

"Never, I did not think of it."

"You know how your father died?"

"Of a broken heart, they said," in a low, sad tone.

"Aye; he was one of the truest men that ever lived, and he died of a broken heart when the first breath of suspicion fell on his name."

"Suspicion," proudly. "Lord Desmond told me no one could blame my father justly."

"Aye, but they blamed him for all that. To explain all I must go farther back: your mother came of a high family, Rosamond; her parents would never have consented to her marriage but that your father settled a large sum of money on her, a hundred thousand pounds, the interest to be paid her during her life, the principal to go to her children at her death. You were her only child, Rosamond, and this sum now constitutes your fortune."

"Yes, so I have been told."

"When your father's speculation failed, when the men and women who had entrusted their savings to him to invest were ruined through no fault of his, the cry arose that because his own child was safe, because until she came of age he enjoyed a large income, he had not cared

for the fate of others. Men told him this, told him to his face. Women brought their little ones and reproached him for ruining them, while his own child lived in luxury. Do you understand me, Rosamond?"

"Yes," with a sad gravity; "but, oh, why did not my father take the money? If his child had suffered too they could not have reproached him, Mr. Ashley?"

"He could not touch that money, no one in the world could do so but you: from the day you were eighteen, Rosamond, the power to lift the reproach off your father's name, the power to undo the ruin of many helpless creatures, has been yours."

"Why was I never told?"

"Lord Desmond was not likely to tell you. He knew none of the particulars. It was your father's dying wish, Rosamond, that you should learn this story from my lips before you were presented at Court or publicly introduced to the world as an heiress. You are perfectly free. This large fortune is legally yours. No voice can blame you if you enjoy it. Only before you entered into the sweets of possession I was to tell you this and leave you free to act as you would."

A perfect silence. The old lawyer wiped his spectacles. He had little doubt of the girl's decision.

"Mr. Ashley, take it all. Let me be poor, only let the reproach be lifted from my father's name. Tell people that if he had had the power he would have done as his child does now—done his utmost to repair the wrong."

Mr. Ashley got up, blew his nose loudly, and kissed Rosamond's forehead.

"Do you know you are a very remarkable young lady? Not one girl in a thousand would act like you."

"Oh, I hope they would. Mr. Ashley, will you tell me one thing? Why was I left at such an expensive school? Why was I suffered to go to Desmond Towers?"

"That you might be perfectly prepared for the world if so be you entered it as an heiress. Your father specially ordered you should hold no intercourse with either of your guardians until you were eighteen. I think he feared the Desmonds would teach you to set too great a value on wealth, and that from me you might get a hint of the future choice which lay before you."

"I am glad my father trusted me."

"There is one thing you have forgotten," gravely. "Sir Reginald Dane."

She opened her eyes in surprise.

"Can you doubt that he will approve? He comes of a noble race; he is the soul of honour."

"I think he will decidedly object to your giving up your fortune. He will call it a fancy—a chimera."

"You are unjust. You should not judge him harshly. I know him, and I am sure he will prefer honour to all."

"Rosamond, if he should not, if he should refuse his consent?"

"I cannot imagine such a case."

"Try," laconically.

"Do you mean that you believe Sir Reginald will refuse to marry me without my fortune?"

"Just that," suppressing all the sympathy he felt, because he knew this was not the time for it.

"You are very cruel—cruel to us both," breathed Rosamond. "Of a man you have never seen you assert that he is a fortune-hunter. To me you say I have been wooed for my money, not for myself."

"I do neither. I do not believe Sir Reginald Dane to be a fortune-hunter. I believe he asked you to marry him because he loved you, but just as firmly I believe he would not have asked you had he known you portionless. He is dreadfully embarrassed; he could not afford to marry any woman who did not bring him a fortune."

Rosamond put one hand to her aching head. Words of Rex's were coming back to her; her complete confidence was shaken.

"Mr. Ashley, even then—even if I lose him—

the money must be given up. I could never bear to use it, knowing what I know now."

"There is the little portion your godmother left you—two hundred a year. It was only a trifle compared to your wealth, but it will be something now."

Rosamond rose. She staggered; her feet seemed to give way under her.

"Mr. Ashley, will you write to—Rex—to Sir Reginald? Will you tell him I give up all—everything, and why I do it? I know he will be true to me; but will you write? I don't think I could bear to; it would seem doubting him."

"I will write. I will write to-day."

"Couldn't we do it now?" resumed Rosamond, with feverish energy. "Could not I sign a paper or something making the money over to you?"

"Are you afraid of changing your resolution, Rosamond?"

"No," proudly. "Only it would be easier now."

She went away slowly to her own room, and sitting down by the window she cried as though her heart would break. It was not that she loved money, Rosamond knew too little of life quite to realise what the loss of it would be. But she was of singular intelligence. She knew Mr. Ashley thought Sir Reginald would not keep to his engagement now she had voluntarily robbed herself of all.

She loved Rex too dearly not to trust him, but every word of his seemed to rise up before her in proof of the lawyer's verdict. She had always heard of Rex as poor. Lord Desmond himself had said he was a bad match. Her lover had not been charmed by her fairy picture of love in a cottage.

Poor Rosamond. She was only eighteen, but a woman's cares and a woman's joys seemed to have come to her. Never since that day when Reginald Dane held her in his arms and asked her to be his wife, had she been a child; never more could she enjoy the freedom from all thought of care that had been hers. She loved him; it was at once her comfort and her sorrow. She loved him and she might be parted from him.

She roused herself at last, bathed her face to try and remove the tear stains, and went slowly downstairs. Mrs. Ashley was alone in the drawing-room. With rare delicacy she never remarked on Rosamond's prolonged absence, but of her own accord, almost as if she had guessed the girl's suffering, she proposed a quiet day at home.

"I feel very tired, and if we are to lose you soon, dear, I should like to have you to myself as much as possible."

Rosamond kissed her. It dawned slowly on the girl that Mrs. Ashley's kindness was as great as Lady Desmond's, and more disinterested.

"Are we really to lose you on Tuesday?"

This was a difficult question to answer. Rosamond knew that if Sir Reginald disapproved of her plans and took back his troth, his sister's house could never more be her home. She sighed as she replied:

"Lady Desmond said she would come for me on Tuesday."

"You must come again some day. The marchioness is over young to take a mother's care of you, and it is a mother's love you need, Rosamond."

"Lady Desmond is only twenty-five," with a smile, "but she seems years and years older than I!"

"You cannot remember your own mother?"

"Not in the least."

"She was not beautiful, but there was something about her face better than beauty. She charmed all hearts, and yet no one could be jealous or envious, she was so sweet and gentle."

As the day wore on, it dawned on Rosamond she could never bear the insufferable suspense of waiting for Reginald's reply. He would receive Mr. Ashley's letter on Saturday; there being no Sunday post in London, his answer

could not reach Bedford Square before Monday, almost twenty-two hours. Rosamond felt she could not live through them. She had been foolish enough to let a stranger write; she ought to have gone herself. With her eyes looking into his, her hands clasped in his, she could best have told him the barrier which had risen up between them, and which yet need be no barrier unless he willed it.

It was a long journey for her to take. She, who had never been in a train all alone in her life. She could never manage it unless she took Mrs. Ashley into her confidence. She had planned out the expedition pretty well, but she could not manage without a little help.

"Are you tired, Rosamond?" asked her hostess, kindly, as she sat beside her silent guest.

"No—yes—no. That is, I was thinking."

"Pleasant thoughts?"

"I was thinking about you."

"About me?"

"Yes, dear Mrs. Ashley. Don't think me wicked and impertinent. Did you love Mr. Ashley very much?"

A smile came on the sweet, languid face.

"I loved him dearly, Rosamond, and I love him just as dearly now."

"Then you will understand. You will help me, won't you?"

"I think I do understand, dear. You love Sir Reginald Dane just as I loved my husband, but, Rosamond, I know the question before you speak, and I dare not advise you."

"It is not that," eagerly. "Can you think I would hesitate about that? It is—how to tell Sir Reginald."

Her hostess was silent, and after a pause Rosamond went on:

"Mr. Ashley said he would write; but, oh! I have been thinking I would so much rather go myself. I must go, I really must."

"It is a long journey."

"But it is light now till nearly eight, and—"

"Rosamond," very tenderly, "if all is as you hope, the journey would be nothing, but—"

"Do not think of that."

"I must. Your journey in hope would be easy enough, but your return without hope—I dare not think of that."

"It is very hard," a little sullenly, "you all have such a bad opinion of Sir Reginald."

"We have not, but the circumstances are against him."

"How?"

"He is not a rich man, dear, and you, when he asked you to be his wife, were a great heiress. He was more than twelve years your senior. You were a perfect child. Would it not have been honourable to have waited until you had had a season in London, and an opportunity of seeing other men more eligible than himself, Rosamond?"

"I love him," answered Rosamond, firmly. "All will be well, only we shall not be quite so rich as he had expected."

"Please Heaven, it may be so. I cannot bear to think of your being unhappy, Rosamond. You seem to me a creature made only for joy. You are too fragile and delicate to bear up against sorrow."

Rosamond, worn out with the strange new sorrowful doubt that had crept into her heart, went to bed early, and slept that calm, unbroken slumber which often succeeds to great excitement. When she awoke it was past ten o'clock, and Mrs. Ashley's maid stood by her bedside holding a tray on which a dainty breakfast was arranged.

Suddenly there rushed back to Rosamond the memory of yesterday's events, and the journey she was to take to-day. But she was calmer and more composed than on the eve. A great consciousness had come to her that she was doing right, an inward conviction that the man she had loved better than life itself would cling to her through all. She made a good breakfast and then got up.

I suppose there comes to all women times in their lives when most of all they care for their

own appearance; when an intense desire to be fair possesses them—to be fair in some man's sight—some man they love. Such a time had come to Rosamond.

Never in her whole life through had she so longed to look her best; never had she spent so much pains on her own adornment as now when she was about to stand before her lover and put his love to the test, and see whether his affection would stand the winter of adversity.

Mrs. Ashley, coming in to see why her guest lingered, thought she had never seen such a vision of loveliness, and yet Rosamond had hardly ever been more simply dressed. She wore some soft spring material, its colour a light grey, a white straw hat trimmed with a wreath of wild flowers. A very little pink ribbon relieved the plainness of the attire and enlivened the toilet.

"You are sure you feel strong enough?" asked Mrs. Ashley.

"Quite sure. Nothing would pain me so much as to give up the idea."

"And you will be back early. No one knows of this but you and me."

"Thank you. But—but Mr. Ashley."

"I have told him the truth—that I advised you to have your breakfast in bed. He is going to a political meeting to-night, and will not be home till late."

Mrs. Ashley ordered her own well-appointed brougham, and they drove to the station almost in silence. Rosamond nearly broke down. The last time she had been at the terminus her companion was Lady Desmond. Her return to the Towers had been a certainty, now it might be that sweet home would shelter her no longer.

Mrs. Ashley placed her in the ladies carriage under the special charge of the guard, and then she went home to meditate on the romance going on before her, and wonder anxiously how Sir Reginald would receive his betrothed and her strange tidings.

It seemed to Rosamond that from the moment she parted from her friend she was in a dream. She had a book and the latest comic papers, but her eyes refused to look at them. She had a basket of rare fruit, but though her lips were parched and dry, she could not touch them.

She sat at the window and looked carelessly out, but her eyes never noticed the beauty of the English scenery through which she passed. Her whole being, her whole soul seemed in an agony of suspense until she had stood close to Reginald Dane—until her eyes had looked into his and read their fate there. She could think of nothing, do nothing.

At last they reached the nearest station to the Towers. There was no carriage there, no fly procurable. Rosamond never faltered in her resolution. Bravely she set out to walk the three weary miles which separated her from her lover.

The April sun was intensely hot, and she carried no parasol. She felt faint with the heat, but no thought of stopping came to her. On, on she plodded as one who cannot rest until at last the carved gates, the lordly spreading trees of Desmond Towers stood before her. For one moment she waited there to gain strength, then bravely pushing back the gate she entered.

Whatever this interview might bring to her, she would always love Desmond Towers. It was the place where the happiest months of her life had been spent; where she had passed from a child to a woman; where she had enjoyed the sweets of love's young dream. If a bitter awakening, a cruel disappointment were in store for her, nothing could yet alter the fact that she had been happy—oh, so happy here.

She had no certain plan. Her first idea had been to go to the grand entrance, be taken to Georgie, and confide all to her. But now that she was actually within the Tower gates she shrank from this course. It was Rex she wished to see, not the marchioness. She knew he spent most of his time out of doors. He might be strolling about. Perhaps if she wan-

dered through all his favourite haunts she should meet him.

It was natural enough that the girl should bend her steps first of all to the place where Rex had told her of his love. Of all the grounds she best loved that spot. Doubtless he did too. So with her tired feet the girl moved quickly yet wearily on. If he were not there she must sit down and rest. She was so tired, so very, very tired.

On a grassy mound beneath the shade of a spreading oak Rosamond sank down—so weary she really needed the rest. Then almost before she had tasted the luxury of repose her very heart beats quickened. She heard her lover's voice. There a few yards distant, visible to her, while the trees hid her from their view, stood Sir Reginald Dane and his sister.

"Sit down, Georgie," cried the clear voice of Rosamond's love. "Sit down. I never get an opportunity to talk to you in the house away from Alick. I have had the most fearful blow this morning. Read that," and he put a letter into her hands, which Rosamond guessed to be the one he had received from Mr. Ashley.

For one instant the girl hesitated. Should she go or stay? If she went she must pass them; if she stayed her suspense would be ended. She should know once and for all how Sir Reginald loved her. And she stayed.

(To be Continued.)

#### SWEEPING THEM OUT.

"How do I get rid of gossips?" asked Miss Hopkins, with a twinkle of amusement in her bright eyes. "Easily enough. I found out the way long ago. The first thing I did was to get the brush and dust-pan, and lay them handy 'gainst my neighbour came in. Soon in pops Mrs. Smith. 'Mrs. Smith,' says I, 'you won't mind my doing a bit of dusting, will you, while you're talking?' Of course she couldn't but be agreeable to that. So down on my knees I goes, and begins to dust with all my might. But somehow it was a very curious thing that the dust allus would gather just under the chair my neighbour was a-sittin' on. She'd shift and shift, but I'd allus be arter her with my old dust-pan; and the dust 'ud get up in her nose, and she'd begin to sneeze—and soon she'd say, 'Well, I think—ketcher!—I'll call in another day, as I see you are—ketcher!—busy.' And so, in less than a week, I had dusted all my neighbours out of the house." Wise Mrs. Hopkins.

#### AN OBJECT LESSON.

A WORKINGMAN in Manchester recently gave an "object lesson" that was full of meaning. Taking a loaf of bread, to represent the wages of his fellow workmen, he cut off a moderate slice, saying to his audience, "This is what you give to the city government." A larger slice, which he then cut off, he said, "This is what you give to the general government." Then, with a vigorous flourish of his knife, he cut off three-quarters of the loaf, saying, "This is what you give to the brewer." Only a thin slice then remained, the greater part of which he set aside for the "public-house," leaving only a few crumbs. "And this you keep to support yourself and family."

#### SAGACITY OF DOGS.

SOME interesting stories are told of the sagacity of dogs concerning the use of money. A terrier, now dead, publicly begged money from suitable persons, showing great discrimination in the selection of persons to whom he made his appeal. When he had an excess of funds—more than he required to buy his modicum of bread at the baker's—he hid his money in the office of his master—who was, and is still, harbour-

master—or sometimes about the quay, in which latter case his boards were frequently found and appropriated by needy and greedy porters or street arabs. He carried on this profitable business of begging on his own account till his teeth were quite worn down by the incessant friction of the coins he had caught up and carried.

Equally intelligent was a Newfoundland dog, who, when offered a coin, if not at the moment hungry, would hide it under his mat, thus gradually accumulating a fund of coppers, from which he abstracted a penny or halfpenny at a time, according to the state of his appetite. He knew perfectly well the difference between the coins and their relative value, and that he was entitled to receive two biscuits for the larger sum, and only one for the halfpenny. Sometimes he only wanted a single biscuit, and wished for the change out of his penny. Now and then he took a fancy for a French roll by way of variety. If you gave him a sixpence he would receive the change, and then allow you to take it out of his mouth, satisfied with his two biscuits.

### BUBBLES.

It struck me as rather peculiar,

But people are strange now-a-days,  
So you must not judge all by appearance,

Make quizzing remarks on their ways;

But I certainly was a bit doubtful  
If everything was upright and straight,

And I tried to put both ends together,  
Sum up 'ere I swallow'd the bait.

I was asked to take shares in a company,  
Which was puffed as a paying concern,

For every pound sterling invested  
You'd be sure to have ten in return.  
I own I should like to add something  
To an income excessively small,  
But I go on the plan that a little  
Is better than nothing at all.

So I waited to see if it worked well  
Before I invested a cent,  
Yet I like to see honesty flourish  
Perseverance get money well spent;  
But rogues that will fitch from the needy

In the end mostly come off the worst,

And I smiled with the calmest derision

When I found that the bubble had burst. O. P.

## TIME'S REVENGE;

OR,

### FOILED AT THE LAST.

#### CHAPTER XXIII.

#### THE FAIRY PRINCE.

Talk not of reason; what but love is reason?  
For what but love is happiness. DENBIGH.

"Oh, is it you, Fayette?" said Margaret, rubbing her eyes and yawning. "It's early, but I asked Madame Vey to let us have breakfast about this time, as you are a country girl, and no doubt used to early hours. It is scarcely nine o'clock. Sit down. I will take a cup of coffee and some dry toast."

Elizabeth, with a long look at the beautiful young lady, disappeared, grinning in token of friendship. Fayette glanced round the close, dimly-lighted chamber, and then sat down. Her mother neither asked for nor offered a kiss

or kind inquiry. But Fayette now desired neither.

The room was as slovenly as any room could well be. Everything seemed in its wrong place, and some tell-tale dust lying about betrayed the truth that no one particularly cared for the comfort or neatness of the place.

Accustomed to the almost prim daintiness of The Sycamores, this discomfort was all the more jarring to Fayette. But she resolved to bear every misery bravely, and took up the coffee-pot with a hand which did not tremble visibly. Margaret Lascelles stealthily watched every change on her candid face.

"We shall not be here very long, my sweet darling," she said. "I am in hopes that we shall be able to run away to Paris soon, and there we shall live, not vegetate."

But, she thought, should her schemes fail, and the young girl was in her way, of no longer any use to her, she would no more scruple to abandon her now, in the heart of this great city, than she had felt some eighteen years ago in leaving her.

"You might like to take a little walk presently," she said. "I am too fatigued to get up just yet. The girl always goes out on her errands at this time, and she will take care of you. It is stupid being mewed up in these close rooms, with nothing to do."

Fayette had a girlish curiosity to see the London streets, which to her country-trained imagination had something fascinating in them. Elizabeth came to remove the tray, and joyfully agreed to take charge of the young lady. The crowds of people, the shops, the rapidly passing vehicles, the sober hurry, the occasional jostlings, confused, but partly interested Fayette.

She lingered for a few moments to gaze at some pretty objects in a window, then, turning away, discovered that Elizabeth had vanished, apparently into space. The surprise and bewilderment at finding herself alone were so great that Fayette with difficulty prevented herself from crying out in alarm.

For several minutes she remained fixed to the spot, looking vainly for the one face she knew. The people streamed past, some this way, others in the reverse direction. Most eyes were directed at her, some with open admiration, some with spiteful envy, some with idle curiosity—all more or less vacantly.

But every face regarded her with the unrecognising glance of a stranger, and the people never ceased hurrying by, until her brain almost began to ache. Then a tall, handsome fellow, rakish and swaggering, loitered up, and smiled at her with an insolent leer.

Her face crimson with anger, her beautiful blue eyes ablaze with indignation, Fayette turned, and walked quickly away. She fancied she remembered the way she had come, recollecting a fruit stall at the corner of the last street.

But with added fear, she found it perfectly impossible to recall the name of the street where her new home was situate. What was to be done? It was a ridiculous, but at the same time really alarming predicament.

All these streets looked so much alike, unless she could trace her way back after the fashion of a Red Indian, by certain landmarks, she did not know what she should do. To her intense relief, she saw the fruit stall, and hurried down the street, a dull, lonely thoroughfare.

Thankful to have gained so much, she walked swiftly on. Perhaps she might come to some object which would serve as a guide. But to her increased alarm, midway down this street a church suddenly appeared before her bewildered eyes. Most certainly she had not passed any church on the way. She stopped, and clasped her hands in utter despair.

"What shall I do?" she cried aloud.

"Please, lady—poor wanderer—please a copper, not broken my fast for the last four days—lady, please," whined a disagreeable, harsh, croaking voice, at her elbow.

Fayette started and saw the dirty face of a

slouching beggar close to her shoulder—a miserable creature he looked, his accents and manner abjectly cringing. Fayette, even in her bewilderment, hurried on to avoid this fellow, who inspired her more with disgust than pity.

But he kept pace with her, shuffling along the pavement, pouring a tale of wretched misery into her unaccustomed ear, the glib words fluently following one another in a whining entreaty. The young girl's heart was touched, and she wished to rid herself of his painful importunity.

She took out her purse, containing very little money indeed, and was searching in it for a sixpence, when the fellow made a sudden clutch, trying to snatch the pretty portemonnaie from her hand.

Just as he caught it, however, it fell from his grasp to the ground, and he uttered a howl of pain and rage. A gentleman had struck his wrist with a sharp blow from a cane, inflicting a good deal of pain and a violent fright.

"Be off, you cowardly thief, you vile, sneaking scoundrel," cried the gentleman, furiously. "You would not get off so easily, I can tell you, if a policeman was near. Get away, you miserable wretch."

The detected thief, foiled, sneaked off, shuffling away like some noxious animal. Fayette, trembling, tears swimming in her eyes, stood leaning against the railings behind her, gazing with profound gratitude at the protector who had so unexpectedly come to her rescue.

Fayette was unable to speak. She took the portemonnaie which the young man picked up from the ground and offered her. The stranger seemed in no haste to urge her to recover her self possession and depart; on the contrary, he waited with exemplary patience and graceful politeness.

It was perhaps an inopportune moment for two young people totally unknown to each other to fall, once and for ever, in love, with all their heart and soul. But falling in love is seldom a wilful act.

"How can I thank you?" said Fayette, at last, a soft crimson glow suffusing her face. She had gazed attentively through her tears at the stranger; unconsciously to her, he realised all her old dreams of what her hero ought to be: tall, gallant, handsome, with a kind, gentle look in deep, passionate eyes.

"Don't mention it, I beg of you," answered he, after the manner of young Englishmen.

"Do you live near? May I—will you allow me either to see you safe home or to call a cab for you?"

These words recalled her difficulties to Fayette. But the presence of this new friend seemed to reassure her, and although she blushed crimson, it was between laughing and crying that she said:

"I must confess to you that I do not know where I live."

"I don't understand," said the young man. "Did you say—"

"I came to London yesterday for the first time in my life," Fayette falteringly continued, "and this morning I came out with a servant, to see some of the places about, and I missed her, in some way, and I did not exactly know the name of the street, and—"

"What a deucedly awkward predicament," exclaimed the young man. "Will you let me see if I can help you? Do you know that I fancy I can guess your name?"

"You?" cried Fayette, half alarmed and half pleased.

"Did you ever by chance hear the name of Eric Armitage?"

"Lady Allenby's son?" exclaimed Fayette.

"Are you not Miss Lascelles?"

"How do you know?"

"I have partly guessed it, and partly I recognise your face from a very indifferent photograph belonging to Miss—Beatrice Allenby," said Eric.

"Oh, I am so glad," imprudently cried Fayette, her heart going out to this new-found friend whom she could regard almost as a relative.

"Glad to have seen me? I am more than glad to have seen you, and to have been able to render you some little service," said Eric, taking her little gloved hand and, with a rapid glance around, audaciously kissing it. Fayette drew back for a moment, startled, but the action was so spontaneous, the eyes met her so frankly and fearlessly, that she could not utter the rebuke that rose to her lips. "Come, we must see what can be done to restore you to—whom? Your mother, I suppose?" Eric went on, gaily—more gaily than existing circumstances warranted. "Do you not remember anything that would serve to jog your memory?"

"No," dolefully answered Fayette, her face turning pale again.

"You don't recollect the name of the street at all? Was it anything like this?" Eric smilingly inquired, taking a letter from his inner coat pocket, and giving it to her.

Fayette uttered a cry of amazement and joy. The letter was directed in full to her—name and address, carefully written—a letter from Beattie. She did not attempt to open it, but stood gazing at the superscription, as a prisoner might gaze upon an unexpected order of release. Eric looked steadfastly at her while her attention was thus for a moment withdrawn from him. He thought he had never seen a more beautiful or interesting creature.

The young man was no longer the weary, preoccupied fop who had annoyed his mother by cynical and jesting remarks. Most people gave him the character of an empty-headed, selfish fellow, but they were wrong. His real nature he kept from contact with persons whom he did not like; this deception was partly unconscious, but partly used by him as a shield. He recoiled from cold, coarse or selfish people as a sensitive plant shudders back from too rough a touch.

"Oh, thank you, thank you," said Fayette.

"Not at all. I was bid to come to see you, to give you this letter," said Eric. "I suppose you know all that has happened at Altham within the last week? You know that Miss—Beatrice is staying with Miss Rochester? I should have called at your present home about two or three o'clock had I not happened to meet you in this singular manner. I did not get on very well at first with Beatrice, but during the last few days we have been very good friends. She wants to know if you are comfortable, and all that kind of thing. There is an idea of her coming to London for a week or so, and then going to Italy for a few weeks, and she says she wants you, if you—if Mrs. Lascelles could spare you for a short time. May I call and see Mrs. Lascelles?"

Fayette shook her head.

"I—I don't know," she said, doubtfully.

"Very well. I'll go and ask her," boldly said Eric, with the smile of a conqueror. "Now I will take you home. It is too early to make a formal visit now, but I am going to call by-and-bye."

At that moment Elizabeth appeared bundling along swiftly, excitedly. She ran up to Fayette, staring hard at Eric with undisguised curiosity.

"Oh, my lor, miss," she panted, "but you have giv me a fright. Lor, I've been running about, and I've been home, and nobody knew nothink about you, no more nor nothink at all. I'm that tired and flurried I can't hardly stand. Wherever did you get to, miss? And Mrs. Lascelles said she didn't think you knowed the name of our street, nor the number of the house, and she's that mad with me; and maddum said I was an idiot, and I don't know what. And ain't I glad I've found you!"

Eric immediately assumed his most disagreeable manner, as he invariably did when he saw anybody he did not like. He put his glass in his eye, stared superciliously at Elizabeth, and said:

"Oh, it's all right. You can run home and tell them your young mistress is quite safe, and will be home at once."

"She ain't no young mistress of mine," retorted Elizabeth; "only a kind of friend like; and I ain't goin' to run. I've been a-runni' "

rather more nor I relishes this mornin', I can tell you, and I ain't a-goin' to run no more for nobody."

Eric, determined on having his own way, to which he had always been accustomed, stared still more superciliously at the indignant Elizabeth, as if he expected her to sink into the earth, or disappear through a trap, like Columbine withered up by his glance. He said, or drawled:

"This young lady is all right. I am going to see her safe home. You can go."

Fayette, worried as she felt, could not resist laughing, but she turned her head away, hoping her ill-timed gaiety would escape notice. But unluckily Eric caught the expression on her face, and so did Elizabeth. Eric coolly offered his arm to Fayette with a paternal air, and Elizabeth, instead of obeying his injunction to depart, followed the two discontentedly, grumbling to herself about things in general, and this "strange young man" in particular.

"I shall keep my eye upon you, mister," she jealously said to herself, as she walked at a short distance behind. "I don't 'old with young gentlemen a-seein' of young ladies 'ome when they don't know nothink about 'em."

It is vain to ask what is this elixir of love which it is either life or death to taste. We must only accept the fact that it gives exquisite happiness or darkest despair: to those who sip or drain the magic cup.

It would need the poet's mystic pen to follow the airy steps of the young lovers—within one short half-hour they were lovers—through those dusty, glaring London streets until they paused on the threshold of Fayette's new home. But even a poet could not render so prosaical a walk poetical. Who ever thinks of dowry-plumaged love trotting about London streets? Yet love may be as romantic in a dusty city street as in the greenest of country lanes.

Poor Elizabeth, forgotten; had her revenge when Eric, with masculine exactness, stopped at the house where Fayette lived. She did not allow of a moment's loitering, but with malicious jealousy darted forward and opened the door officiously with a latchkey, moving aside then to let Fayette enter.

Fayette, magnetised, was as unwilling to enter as Eric was to let her go. She stood irresolute. It seemed so ungrateful, so inhospitable, so unkind, so uncivil, to let one who had been so good to her depart in this summary way. Yet it was not in her power to bid him welcome. She dared not ask him to cross the threshold of her mother's habitation. Tears of mortification rose to her eyes, and she extended her hand to him with a pathetic, pleading look.

"I'll just run in and tell Mrs. Lascelles and maddum you've come 'ome all right, miss," said Elizabeth, impatient at the slight delay, and in terror of bringing fresh trouble on her unhappy towlsed head. "You just go up to Mrs. Lascelles' room, miss, will you, directly? What an unlucky morning's work it have been, to be sure."

With this mean, Elizabeth pranced into the house.

"Thank you very much, Mr. Armitage," murmured Fayette, as if in a dream.

Eric caught her hands and held them in his clasp for a few moments. He looked attentively at her, and with a strange sympathetic glance read the deeper trouble in her eyes.

"It is little enough good any of us can do in this tiresome old world of ours," he lightly replied, loosing her hands, but still gazing with a mesmeric look into her face, "so we ought to be thankful for every small chance that falls in our way. Mind, I am going to call on your mamma this afternoon. Beatrice and Jessie Rochester are awfully anxious for you to go with them to Italy," he went on, falling into his everyday fashion of talking. "Good-bye. I am so glad I happened to be in the way when that wretched creature annoyed you. Good-bye," he again repeated, unwilling to go, yet conscious that he must not stop.

"Good-bye," said Fayette, holding out her hand, then quickly withdrawing it, the remem-

brance of that audacious kiss causing her face to tingle.

Eric merely smiled—a little sadly—and went down the steps, and then slowly departed. Fayette remained for a few moments in the dim, long, narrow entrance hall, trying to recover her half-scattered senses. Then she slowly went up the dark staircase, her thoughts following the slight figure which had departed in the summer sunshine. For a minute she paused at the closed door of her mother's room. She touched the door, thinking, with a strange kind of superstitious feeling, that if it yielded to her hand she would go in, if it did not she would pass on.

"She must know I am safe," the young girl thought. "I am sure she must know I have come back."

The door did not move. Almost with a sigh of relief she swiftly passed on to her little room upstairs. On entering she fastened the door, and then bathed her face and hands in cold water. This relieved her, and then she lay down on the little bed, with the hope of easing the pain and whirl in her excited brain. And then, over-tired, over-agitated, she fell fast asleep.

Eric Armitage, having nothing in particular to occupy his time, and nowhere in particular to go, loitered in the dusty, hot street instead of departing. He lighted a cigar, and having walked slowly to one extreme end of the dull thoroughfare, turned aimlessly and walked to the other end. What did it matter, he thought. One place was as good, or nearly as good, as another. Why he should linger he could not have explained. He had no expectation of again seeing the pretty creature who already filled all his thoughts to the exclusion of everything else, and two or three hours must elapse before he could reasonably call.

He had made a pilgrimage to each end of the street many times, and nearly consumed his cigar, when a sudden irritation against his own foolish behaviour caused him to resolve to go anywhere rather than remain wasting his time in this particular spot. He laughed a little at this waste of time, when he had nothing to do; but still, he must go.

A crafty caddy, who had been eyeing him for some minutes, hailed him as he petulantly flung away his cigar, but before he could answer the fellow the door of the house where he had left Fayette was opened with desperate haste, and Elizabeth came flying out, looking from side to side hurriedly. Eric, ashamed of being detected still loitering about, turned hastily away, hoping the girl would not notice him; but she darted down upon him with the celerity of a vulture, and stopped him.

"Oh, I didn't expeck for to see you, mister," she cried, excitedly. "I thought you'd a been gone this hever so long. But, if you please, will you kindly step in for a minute or two? Mrs. Lascelles was in such a way when she thought you'd gone without a-seein' you, and she told me, if such a thing happened as that you might still be about anywhere, and I should be so lucky as for to see you, I was to give you her very best respects, and she'd like to see you."

"What does she want to see me for?" asked Eric, not in his most amiable manner.

"As for that, sir, I ain't no idea, as she didn't say. But will you please walk in, as Mrs. Lascelles has a-been makin' such a fuss, and I am that behind with my work this mornin' that I can't stop no longer a-gossipin' in the street, which it ain't my habit to do at any time," added Elizabeth, looking very virtuous and industrious.

Eric bestowed one of his most disdainful looks upon the girl, which was entirely thrown away upon her. Elizabeth had no great opinion of gentlemen, especially young gentlemen, as she always declared "she wasn't a-goin' to put herself out of the way for none on 'em."

She hurried back into the house, and hustled Eric into the front parlour, shutting him in with much the same indifference that she would have put a bird in a cage. This room belonged to a gentleman who went out every morning, remained out all day, and sometimes did not come

back until the small hours of the next morning; but, as a favour, Madame Vey had allowed Mrs. Lascelles to receive this visitor here.

Eric felt a lively curiosity to see Fayette's mother, but he heartily wished he had gone away, leaving it in his own power to pay her a proper visit at a decorous hour. Footsteps passed up and down, an occasional voice spoke on the staircase, but the minutes glided by, and Mrs. Lascelles did not appear. By degrees he worked himself into a ferment of irritation and annoyance, but at the end of about half an hour the door opened gently.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### A SPIDER'S WEB.

This is a very woman:  
Her sex's avarice, and she, in one,  
Is all her sex. DEVEREUX.

MARGARET LASCELLES, by the aid of a stick, slowly limped into the room where Eric Armitage was waiting so impatiently. The two looked eagerly at each other with a searching gaze, though only for a few moments. The young man drew slightly back with a chill of disappointment.

He had not imagined to himself what Fayette's mother would be like, but still, he was seized with a violent prejudice against her, while he bowed with urbane politeness. It was by mereest hap that Mrs. Lascelles had sent for him.

She had no idea whatever respecting him, only she felt intensely anxious to know something of the mysterious stranger who had met with Fayette in so singular a manner. Full of deceit, and perpetually scheming herself, she was ready to credit the young girl whom she claimed as daughter with a similar crafty nature. It was of the first importance that she should ascertain the facts with regard to this person, of whose very name she was ignorant.

If Fayette had a lover, and chose to conceal the fact, she must know as much as could be gleaned respecting the affair. She did not believe that Fayette had encountered this young man by accident. Who and what was he? She had not had an opportunity of questioning Fayette, for she had not seen her since her morning's adventure.

"Thank you so much," she murmured, holding out her slender white hand, and sitting down, pale with the effort of walking. "So kind, so truly good of you. Forgive my sending my servant to bring you back, but I longed to thank you, Mr.—Mr.—"

"Armitage, Eric Armitage," said the young man, taking a card from his pocket, and giving it to her.

At one corner was written, in pencil, "Altenham."

"As I thought," Mrs. Lascelles started to herself. "These girls are always the same. What an idiot I must have been not to see little Miss, she could not have helped betraying herself. How far has this affair gone? Can I yet crush it? That he is her lover I have not the smallest doubt."

She knew that Hubert Allenby's second wife had been a widow named Armitage; this young man was possibly a son, or nephew. It was slow, cautious work finding out what she wanted to know, and she saw that already her visitor was fretting and fuming. Many times he eagerly glanced at the door, as if expecting Fayette would appear.

"You have lately come from Altenham?" she sighed. "Ah, you are probably an old friend of my darling's, although I have not heard her mention your name?"

"I never saw her before to-day," blantly replied Eric.

And he repeated the history of his meeting with Fayette exactly as it had occurred. Margaret Lascelles listened, a bland smile on her handsome face, entirely disbelieving nearly every sentence he uttered. She tried to gaze at him, to read his innermost heart, but her eyes

sank again and again, before the frank, truthful look that met her.

"Indeed!" she said, as he paused. "What a very curious, not to say singularly romantic, chain of circumstances. Did I understand you to say you have just come from Altenham? You, I believe—you—do not live there?" she added, hesitating, anxious to keep up an appearance of being acquainted with his circumstances.

"I came from India with Sir Hubert and my mother," simply answered Eric, "and I have been staying at Altenham ever since. As you are no doubt aware Sir Hubert had not long returned, and—"

"Oh, yes, I, as you no doubt have heard, was the wife of Sir Hubert's elder brother. But I have been very cruelly treated. My dearest child's rights I am determined to struggle for at the cost of life itself. Never will I stand by and see her defrauded."

"By Jove, I should think not," cried Eric, moving his chair about an inch nearer to Fayette's mother. "Are the family trying to defraud her? But there isn't any family, there's only Gerald, you know, and if all people say is true, he will be—"

"What?" wheedlingly asked Margaret, moving her chair a couple of inches nearer to Eric.

But he suddenly looked exceedingly blank, rose, and walked nervously to the window. For a moment Mrs. Lascelles was utterly disconcerted. Her fingers twitched, clasped, unclasped, and twitched again, as if she would have felt great satisfaction in seizing Eric and shaking him, as children shake a bran doll.

"It has been a sad, sad blow," she murmured in her most melodious tones, applying the end of a handkerchief to her eyes. "For me, I have lost my kindest, dearest, most honoured friend. I feel sure he would not have robbed my child of a doit. He would have helped me to prove my marriage."

Eric wheeled quickly round, and looked at her.

"Yes," continued Margaret, hiding her face in the filmy cambrin, through which, however, she took care to see perfectly well, as professional clairvoyants can. "My sweet one and I are in heavy trouble. I shall be obliged now to go to law with the family, to drive them into giving me my child's inheritance. Has she never told you of this, then?" asked Mrs. Lascelles, suddenly emerging from the handkerchief, and staring at him.

"I had the honour to tell you that I met Miss Lascelles for the first time this morning," said Eric, coldly.

"Ah, true. My poor head—my unhappy, over-excited brain! Ah, me! but, as I have already said, I shall be obliged to compel them to give me my own sweet one's rights. It will doubtless be Sir Gerald whom I must battle with."

"I don't think so," said Eric, hastily. "I believe Miss Allenby is to have everything, and she seems awfully fond of Miss Lascelles. My mother is in an awful rage; you know Sir Hubert died without a will, and Mr. Fielding says the whole of the property goes to Beatrice. Of course it doesn't matter about telling you how things are going on, as you were Sir Hubert's sister-in-law."

But he felt a twinge of conscience in having allowed himself after all to tell her. Margaret Lascelles sat for a few moments as if paralysed. She really felt utterly bewildered, and would have pressed many questions, but feared to risk some false step.

"Is Sir Gerald now at Altenham?" she faltered.

"No. He left it immediately on Sir Hubert's death, and came to London. He may have returned yesterday, or this morning, though."

"This Mr. Fielding whom you named just now—"

"He was Sir Hubert's solicitor, you know."

"Yes, yes, I forgot. I forgot everything. I must see him. Where can I find him?"

"I can't tell you. I don't know anything about him. But," Eric went on, eagerly, seeing a fair excuse for calling again, "I can easily

ascertain his whereabouts and let you know."

"You are too, too kind," murmured Margaret, trying to look angelically grateful. "And at the same time could you let me know where Sir Gerald is?"

"Oh, certainly," replied Eric. "Perhaps I might be able to tell you to-morrow."

"Thanks, thanks, Mr. Armitage. I must not detain you any longer. Already I have trespass—far too long on your time," said Margaret Lascelles, who began to fear that Fayette might come in search of her, and again meet this young man.

Eric unwillingly went, vexed and disappointed at not obtaining another glimpse of the beautiful creature who had in a moment become his love, his queen. A very uneasy idea haunted him that he might have been too communicative with Mrs. Lascelles; but he easily quieted his conscience, and with a lingering gaze at each of the windows of the house, he reluctantly departed.

Margaret Lascelles buried her face in her hands to shut out the light, for she wanted to think. Could it be true that Beattie Allenby was to be the owner of the great Altenham property? It could not be. Yet, if Gerald were to become master of those estates, farewell to any hope of carrying out her daring scheme.

Could she gain the help of this young fellow, who evidently was in love with Fayette? She feared not. She must risk going to Scotland herself, find a village inn, and write with her own hand the two names which were to serve as a clasp to link the chain of falsehood. But how could she do this? Wherever she went her remarkable appearance attracted all eyes, and awakened impudent curiosity.

It was one thing for a man to quietly glide through one place after another; it was quite a different matter for a lady to travel hither and thither. But supposing she dared all, if Gerald was the one she had to meet in the battle—could she boldly deny to him that she had made any fatal admission? Could she show him the very letters with which she was about to tamper? She thought she might. And if Beattie was the enemy, would her old affection for Fayette be sufficiently strong to induce her to yield up half of her splendid possessions?

"I should say not," sneered Margaret Lascelles, rising at length by aid of the stick which had helped her to walk. "No, no. She would be a very great fool if she gave up anything. If she showed herself such a simpleton she would be no true Allenby. A nest of vipers have the Allenbys always been. If I gained nothing by it, I should feel a malicious pleasure in cheating them. I would rather a thousand times cheat them than take a free gift from their mean, cruel hands. I am tired with thinking. I must see this beloved daughter of mine. But at all hazards, I will not let a week pass before I have seen Gerald Allenby."

## CHAPTER XXV.

### BEATTIE'S LETTER.

I know how far a daughter owes obedience:  
But duty has a bound like other empires:  
It reaches but to life. DEDRUS.

ENTIRELY unaccustomed to falling asleep in the daylight, Fayette awakened with a curious dazed sensation. For a few moments she could not recall what had happened—could hardly realise that she was in a strange place. Then, with a new glow of pleasant hope and radiant confidence, she remembered the hero of her morning's adventure. With a girl's vivid fancy, she half imagined it must have been a dream altogether.

But Beattie's unopened letter, lying half clasped in her hands, showed her that no fairy dream had come to mock her. As she thought how she had forgotten this letter, the first she had ever had occasion to receive from Beattie, a carnation tint dyed her face. She had just unfastened the envelope, deeply edged with black, and of the most superlative quality of paper, and was going to read her letter, kissing



[FOUND.]

it from a girlish fondness for the writer, when the door was pushed open and Margaret Lascelles walked in, hobbling by means of her stick.

"Lie still, my sweet angel," said Margaret, sinking on the foot of the little bed as if exhausted. "Why did you not come to gladden my eyes when you found your way home? Kiss me, dearest. Oh, the anguish of mind I suffered when I heard you were missing. I fancied you had perhaps run away to poor old Prue Ibbotson—I felt positively jealous," she went on, laughing gaily. "You have had a letter. A love letter? Fie, sweet one—you did not tell your mother you had a lover."

"This is from Beattie!" said Fayette, her face crimson.

"What does she say?"

"I have not read it yet."

"Never mind. Tell me first about your terrible adventures, and then we will read this letter from the dear cousin."

Fayette repeated, as Eric had done, the simple history of her morning's fright and subsequent rescue. Mrs. Lascelles listened with downcast eyes, a half sneering smile on her lips, never making the slightest comment, but watching to try if possible to discover some discrepancy between this account and the one she had already heard.

"And now for the letter," she said, pleasantly, without making any remark on the story.

It was hard that Fayette should be obliged to read the first letter she had ever received like a schoolgirl before the mistress. She felt inclined to rebel, but after a brief pause, running her eager eyes quickly over the letter, she slowly read it aloud. As she read, she could not help thinking how she would have anxiously searched all over the house to find an auditor in Aunt Prue.

Beattie's pen had run swiftly, almost joyously, over the narrow strip of white paper lying within the deep black border. She said she supposed Fayette had seen the letter written by her to Aunt Prue, but at all events she would tell her all that had happened. It was from Mr.

Rochester's house she was writing. Her father's funeral would take place in four days, when she must return to Altenham, but after that she was going to Italy with the Rochesters for some weeks, and she wanted Fayette to join them if her mother could spare her. She added that she had reason to believe the great Altenham property would be hers; and then carelessly scribbled:

"PERCY has been here. I was quite surprised to find he is an old friend of Mr. Rochester's—he was an old, immensely old friend of Miss Rochester's brother, and that is the reason they like him so much. You would have laughed to see how hugely astonished he was to see me at The Towers—that is the name of the Rochesters' house, you know, and I meant to have written it at the top of my letter, only I forgot."

Margaret Lascelles listened to the letter as she had listened to the history of Fayette's adventures, in dead silence. When Fayette ended, with the urgent entreaties of Beattie that she should go to Italy with her, and with protestations of affection, kisses, and the usual flourishes adorning young ladies' letters, she slowly raised her eyes, and looked at Fayette with the sly glance of a lynx.

"Does your cousin mean to say that she is to be absolute owner of the Altenham estates?" she said, softly.

"I suppose so," answered Fayette, rather wearily.

"But it is impossible. My child, my darling, tell me—were you and this cousin of yours fond of each other?"

"Oh, yes," replied the young girl, smiling in spite of herself.

"Do you not think Beatrice Allenby will forget you in the splendour of her new home?"

"I do not think so, mother. I am not afraid."

"What do you fancy she will say when she is told that you claim one full half of this fine new possession of hers? It is one thing to generously offer trifling benefits—quite another to

be obliged to yield up one's treasures as a simple matter of right."

"I claim?" said Fayette, looking at her mother in amazement. "I claim Beattie's possessions! I do not understand."

"I shall claim for you. You are not of age—you are an infant," gaily laughed Margaret. "By your grandfather's will you are entitled to one full half of the Altenham estates. My pretty one, had the Fates decreed you to be a boy Miss Beattie would have had nothing, and you would have walked off with everything."

Mrs. Lascelles concluded with a merry laugh, as if the entire matter was a childish jest. But a dead silence followed her words. Fayette looked at her as if petrified. The young girl was innocent as a child, and, as regarded the world, as ignorant; but some unexplainable instinct told her that the woman who was speaking so lightly was not speaking the truth. Some natures are like flowers: turn them which way you will, they still stretch out their tendrils to the light of Heaven.

"But," continued Margaret, "I must first prove my marriage with your father. That will be easily done. We will not talk of these disagreeable business matters just now. You are tired, love. At two o'clock we will have our frugal little dinner—as yet, sweet, we are humble folks, with no money to buy luxuries, and we must fare as poor people fare. Then we will be extravagant enough to have a hansom cab, and we will go and see some of the finest London streets. Come down to my room in half an hour, pet. By the way," she concluded, as she rose, clutching her stick, "I saw your friend, Mr. Eric Armitage, this morning. I thanked him for being so kind to you, foolish little Babe in the Wood."

She glanced keenly at Fayette, whose face betrayed her by flushing rose pink.

"Good," muttered Margaret Lascelles, as she hobbled out. "I must watch like a dozen detectives, or the girl will slip through my fingers."

(To be Continued.)



[A BITTER CONFESSION.]

## AFTER MANY DAYS; —OR— THE HUSBAND AND THE LOVER. (A COMPLETE STORY.)

### CHAPTER I.

"WELL, my boy, come back at last. It does my old eyes good to see you again," exclaimed Captain Gascoyne, a fine-looking but somewhat haggard man, whose face betokened at once exposure to rough weather and unsparing toil in former days.

And so it was that worn, bronzed face was no incorrect indication of the past career of the noble old man. He had served with distinction in the navy of his beloved country, though his lack of interest, and it might be absence of good luck, had retarded his advancement, and he had finally been compelled to retire on a pension which was barely sufficient for his own wants and the education of the only child left by a deceased wife.

But he was a proud and happy man nevertheless. He could not but be aware that he was covered with laurels, however scantily they had been set in gold, and that no man in the service had been more invariably respected by his comrades. And what was far more precious to his heart and animating to his hopes, was the brilliant promise that his boy's career might well animate in his bosom.

Wilfred Gascoyne had worked hard and displayed talent of no ordinary character, and carried off all the best prizes and the scholarship available for his competitions, and this at once diminished the expenses of his education and increased the prospects of his success.

He was intended for the law, and at the time when the return which caused his father so much joy took place, he had nearly completed his university career, and was well prepared for

a start in his honourable and arduous profession. His hopes were strong, his ambition laudably high, so far as his success was in question; but there were other hopes and aspirations that were ever dear and perhaps less confessed even to his own heart. But these were alas! only too dependent on his progress in life not to make his success almost painfully anxious to his young spirit.

"And I can tell you home is the pleasantest place still, my dear father," he replied, returning his father's grasp with interest. "I don't think you will ever manage to get rid of me, even when I ought to be starting one on my own account. You are looking wonderfully well too, as hale as—"

"A weather-beaten tar can be expected to be," interrupted the captain. "Something like a gnarled oak—with more strength than beauty in its appearance. Well, I'd like to live long enough to see you comfortably established in a home of your own, with a nice little wife, and it may be some little ones, and then I believe I could die as happy as a brave man should."

A slight flush came on the young man's face at the words, but he only replied to the last part of the speech.

"Don't talk of dying, my dear father; you're good for many long years, I hope; and as to the marriage part of your scheme, you'll have to live a good time first, I expect. A briefless barrister must not think of such a luxury as a wife."

"Well, well, time enough, time enough," said the captain. "One never knows what a day may bring forth. Wonders never cease, they say, and do you know, by the way, that little Lydia Devaux has turned out to be an heiress, and in a most romantic style too. A godmother whom she never even saw has kindly taken herself from this wicked world, and still more kindly bequeathed her worldly possessions to her pretty granddaughter, who will enjoy them far better than an elderly invalid."

"Wilfred was briefly unfastening the straps of the Gladstone bag he was about to open, and

when he again looked up he had at least an outward appearance of indifference to the interesting intelligence.

"Very pleasant, of course, for Miss Devaux, though whether the old lady considered herself past the enjoyment of her goods and chattels may be rather doubtful," he said, rather bitterly. "Was it very sudden, or did the young lady herself expect her windfall?"

"Why, Wilfred, how strangely you take it," said his father, looking at him in some surprise. "I thought you would be quite excited at the idea of your old playfellow getting thirty thousand pounds instead of being dependent on old Ingram for her present and future livelihood. It's not a pleasant position for a girl, nor a safe one either."

"Only that Mr. Ingram is rich enough, one would think, to take care of his ward," returned the son, still busy with his lock and straps.

Evidently the key did not fit somehow, but where the fault lay remained to be seen.

"Well, he always announced openly to me, and I believe to others also, that he did not mean to make Lydia his heiress, nor even leave her more than a pittance," returned the captain.

"I always fancied that he did it to prevent fortune-hunters coming after the girl, but now I think it really was his intention, and I'm very glad the girl is independent of him."

"Only that her danger will be as great as the one you supposed he feared," said Wilfred, constrainedly. "There will be plenty of candidates, I daresay, for the heiress, though she may not be quite foolish enough to be deceived by them," he added, cynically.

"Nor will there be quite such temptations; I believe the old lady left thirty thousand pounds and plate and jewels, and all that kind of toggery, you know, Wilfred; but that's nothing to old Ingram's wealth, even if he had divided it between her and his nephew," returned the captain.

"What nephew? I never heard of him before," exclaimed Wilfred, eagerly.

"No, nor did I till lately, except in very casual allusion," said his father. "However, he has turned up now, and a fine young fellow he is. He is in the army, and not long returned from foreign service, so I expect that accounts for his not putting in an appearance before."

"How long has he been here?" asked Wilfred, at last succeeding in his efforts to penetrate into the bag, and drawing from it a splendid field-glass which he had brought for his father's especial use in his rambles.

"Oh, a month or more, and he does not seem in a hurry to be off, quiet as the place is. I should not wonder if he finds Whitefriars pleasant quarters," replied the captain, with a knowing look. "Thank you heartily, my boy," he continued, examining his present critically; "this is a decided improvement I can see at once on the old one, but I'll soon test it thoroughly. I promise. You're a good fellow to think of your old father's fancies, my lad."

"Two little else to think of at present," returned Wilfred, sadly. "I'm glad you like it, sir, and I'll go and make myself presentable for dinner while you examine it."

And he bounded upstairs to his room and shut the door behind him with unconscious violence.

"Can it be?" he murmured, dashing his cap down as if to relieve his feelings by some abrupt action. "Can she be false? Will money change her—that does that she professed to despise? But no; I am an idiot to think it—aye, worse than an idiot to be capable of slandering an angel. Yet she did not answer my last letter, and even when I did hear from her she spoke of its being wrong and dangerous to carry on a clandestine correspondence, though she knew so well that I would never lead her to do wrong, and when it was coming to an end, and I should speak openly to my father and her guardian. Will she meet me, I wonder?—that will be the next test. Surely she cannot fail, she will not be so false—so cruel. I will wait—I will wait before I will condemn thee, my sweet love, my precious one."

And he took out a miniature from his bosom and kissed it as if to apologise to the mute and unconscious representative of his beloved for the injustice he had done her. In truth, Wilfred and Lydia had been lovers long before they had reached the age that is supposed to justify the name.

He was some years older than the young ward of Mr. Ingram, but Lydia was so isolated from other companions of her own sex and age, that their ideas and sports and pursuits were more identical than might otherwise have been the case; and a strong sympathy and deep love grew up gradually and surely in Wilfred Gascoyne's intense grave nature. But when at last the moment of parting, that test of feeling, came the real state of matters opened but too widely before his mind.

He was a struggling, penniless worker in the world, and Lydia was the ward if not the heiress of a wealthy man, and brought up in the luxury and ease with which such a home surrounded her. He thought that it would be cruel and hopeless to give his father the pain of pleading his cause in vain with the rich parvenu, and equally needless to make him a confidant when action was impossible. So he resolved to keep his secret till he should return successful from his preliminary career, and till he was prepared to enter on his profession with zeal and energy and hope.

But it was more than human, or, at least, than youthful nature could attain, to keep entire silence and separation from his beloved, and ere he had left Hasland he had told Lydia of his love, though he bound her by no pledge, no engagement, that could fetter her for the future.

"You will write to me sometimes, dearest. At least, there can be no harm and no difficulty in that," he said, when she had shyly and sweetly confessed that his feelings were returned, and that his love was a prized and welcome offering.

"How can I? Mr. Ingram will be sure to ask where the letters come from, and I never

wrote to anyone, you know, Wilfred," she said, deprecatingly.

"Oh, I will manage that with Emma, your old nurse, and my good friend," he said, eagerly. "The letters can be exchanged through her, and you know well, Lydia, you can trust me, and what is more, that it will only be for a short time we need observe these precautions. I would never deceive you, never willingly lead you wrong, dear girl; but it is too terrible a sorrow for me to leave you without one link to bind us—some means of communicating with each other. You will consent, my love?"

She did consent, and till this last month or so before Wilfred's return the lovers had corresponded regularly, though not frequently, and the young man had no cause to doubt the constancy of his Lydia from the loving though maidenly tenderness of her letters, and the involuntary expressions that showed how completely his image occupied her heart and thoughts. But then why had she never mentioned the new guest at Whitefriars? Did she think it would excite suspicion in his mind, a menacing idea? Was she afraid to betray a dawning interest in her new acquaintance?

"I am an idiot to torment myself thus; I shall hear all to-night," he murmured. "In the silver moonlight I shall once more see my precious one's lovely features, and hear the assurance of her constant, unswerving love. Yes, I am an idiot to doubt."

Two or three hours later and he was standing face to face with that worshipped idol of his young heart, gazing into eyes, listening to her tones as if his whole future on earth depended on the tidings they conveyed. Then he spoke in his turn in a voice broken by emotions of surprise and bitter mortification, and ill-concealed agony of spirit.

"Lydia, can it be possible? Do you really mean that you can give me up—that our engagement is at an end?" he exclaimed, hoarsely.

The girl thus addressed was lovely enough to excuse a man's wild passions, or cause his uncontrolled despair. She stood there in the shadow of a spreading laburnum tree, her graceful head bent under the reproaches of her lover, yet with a wilful and weary look that showed her resolution was too fixed for such reproaches to avail.

"You must see that it is for the best, Wilfred," she replied, in a voice whose alluring siren tones corresponded but too faithfully with her other charms for the young man's peace. "Our engagement, as you call it, was but a boy and girl affair, that never could be considered binding. And now, as you know, it would be more imprudent than ever to think of such a thing."

"Of course, you judge me by yourself, Lydia," returned Wilfred, calmly. "Yes, I am going away. I meant to have gone to win fortune and fame for your sake, now I will do so for—revenge."

She looked bewildered.

"I do not understand you; what will you revenge?" she asked, timidly.

"Oh, never mind," he said, sarcastically; "do not fear, Lydia, I shall not deal in poisons, nor powder and shot, when you and your future husband are married. But still, be assured the time will come when I shall be avenged—aye, and when, perhaps, you least expect it; and in your hour of need you will rue the day when you threw away a true and loving heart."

He flung away the hand he had taken in his unrestrained passion, and which lay passively in his as if its owner were stunned and powerless to resist the clasp. Then, with a last, lingering look that drank in a deep draught of love and misery, and that graved yet deeper her beautiful features on the iron tablet of memory, Wilfred Gascoyne turned away and strode rather than walked from the spot that had so often witnessed their loving tryst.

Lydia Devaux stood for a brief space stunned and suffering. It was a moment of real agony and repentance that, had Wilfred paused to test

its salutary effect, might have averted years of suffering to both. But he was gone, and by slow degrees the young girl's impulsive mood changed, from the sense of desolation and guilt which had at first pressed upon her like a nightmare, to a very different frame of mind.

She began to feel that Wilfred was extremely unkind and unjust in his anger; he ought to have had more consideration for her; he should have seen that their union was impossible, and that she was, in truth, acting for the true happiness of both by the present sacrifice on which she insisted.

She walked slowly and poutingly towards her home, the tears dried up in her burning eyes, and her lovely cheeks warm with the agitation she had recently suffered. She was too much engrossed by her fluttering heart, her throbbing pulses, her hungry sense of wrong to be conscious of the near approach of a quick, manly step, nor to perceive the flash of pleasure in the fine, melting eyes of one of the handsomest officers in her Majesty's service, as her light form came into view. But a rich, mellow voice soon awakened her from her deep reverie.

"Lydia, dearest Lydia, this is an untold-for happiness. It is so seldom that you will give me a chance of seeing you alone, and yet I have paused to speak what is in my heart ever since I saw your lovely self. Lydia, I have seen many fair and brilliant women in my long wanderings, but I have never yet been captive to their smiles, never felt the magic of such eyes as yours, that speak such volumes to my soul."

He had often assumed significant words of love and admiration in her ear, and his eyes had spoken even more plainly than his lips what would one day be poured out in burning, passionate words. But it was the first time that he had thus plainly and resolutely unveiled his soul before her, and her heart sank and her limbs quivered with the emotion that she could not subdue and dared not to betray.

"I cannot live without you, my beautiful, my worshipped one," he said, softly, as she stood in a graceful attitude of subdued shyness. "If you send me from you I mean to change into a regiment on active service; I will go to the most pestilential climate I can find, and seek an early and death rather than a miserable life."

"And break your uncle's heart," said Lydia, half reproachfully, yet with an arch glance from her liquid eyes that was not altogether discouraging.

"My uncle would be as much to be pitied as myself if you refuse to fulfil the cherished dream of his life," returned Cyril, more boldly. "It is all that is needed to make his old age blessed and happy. Lydia, you are his ward—his adopted child, he will make me his heir. We shall both be as his children; he only wished us to be united to complete his fondest hopes. His last years will be blessed indeed with our care and love."

What could Lydia Devaux say or do under such earnest pressure? She certainly did not utter a stern or even a faltering "No," even if the actual full and coveted "Yes" did not form itself on her pretty lips. It needed but the half-tender, half-authoritative remonstrance of her guardian to bring the matter to a crisis and complete the conquest.

"You do not know your own mind. It is but maidenly hesitation. I must take it in my own hands," he said, decidedly. "I'll assume all the responsibility on my own shoulders. You are engaged to Cyril, my next of kin, my only male relative, and I will arrange accordingly."

And the old gentleman gave a knowing nod as if to indicate that there would be a corresponding arrangement of the large wealth at his disposal if they carried out his wishes and plans. It was rather an abrupt and wholesale way of disposing of the fate and happiness of two human hearts.

But Lydia was perhaps too fascinated by the glittering spells of her soldier love, and too submissive to the will of her guardian for resistance, and in a few short hours after her part-

ing with Wilfred Gascoyne, she became the affianced bride of Mr. Ingram's heir.

There was little delay in the preparations for their marriage. The wealth of the bride and the expectations of the bridegroom soon banished all difficulties in the shape of trousseaux, jewels and settlements, which spring up like magic at the touch of money and what money brings.

And in less than three months the day was fixed for the bridal of the fortunate pair. Wilfred Gascoyne heard all, knew all, and still he lingered on the torturing scene as by a sort of fascination. He was resolved to see the end of the bright hopes that had gilded his horizon like the rays of a rising sun.

At last came the fatal day. The wedding thus hurried on arrived at last. A gay party was assembled to do honour to the occasion and offer their good wishes to the young pair, and a lovelier bride could not have been found to receive their homage and their congratulations.

The bridal dress, the glittering jewels were not more graceful or dazzling than their wearer, and the words she uttered were spoken in the silvery musical voice that gave them a new charm. Only one cloud marred the sunshine, only one skeleton appeared in the brilliant, joyous crowd.

Wilfred Gascoyne was there, accompanying his father as a self-invited guest, and Mr. Ingram could scarcely risk the harmony of the occasion or offer an insult to his old friend by resenting the liberty. Moreover the rejected lover brought the bride a gift which he presented in person, and a costly jewel it certainly was.

It was a splendid opal and ruby cross set in rich gold, and most tasteful and beautiful in design, but in which when closely inspected were sharp, pointed, jagged edges that might well prick the wearer with secret and slow but irritating torture.

"You will wear this for the sake of an old friend, I am quite sure, Mrs. Cyril de Winton," he said, laying a decided and slow emphasis on every syllable of her new name. "It is a glittering and dazzling cross, and," he added, in a lower tone, "if you feel the burden heavy, then think of me."

He did not add "pity me," "refer to me," "fly to me for help or comfort." But his manner and words were strangely at variance. One was so cold and constrained and severe, and the other so speciously courteous and kind and friendly-like.

The bride fairly quivered under the ominous and veiled sarcasm, and Wilfred for the moment was avenged. He looked calm and indifferent as he saw the bridal kiss bestowed on the lips of his idol, and watched her departure as she was borne away in triumph by her handsome and happy bridegroom.

He was outwardly as careless and indifferent as any one of the bridesmaids in attendance. Yet had anyone witnessed the burst of agony that followed his retreat into his own chamber, the terrible, difficult tears that are so fearful when shed by manly eyes, it would have been but too apparent that he was piercing his own heart to the very vitals while thus striving to stab her hardness to the core.

## CHAPTER II.

Ten years had passed away. Cyril de Winton was a fair young man of twenty-seven years of age, fairer and more attractive perhaps than on the bridal day, for her beauty had matured into gorgeous loveliness. And Cyril too was still handsome and high bred looking, and when it pleased him to be so, still fascinating in no ordinary degree.

But from some cause or other a gloom did too often sit upon his brow, and a cankering bitterness tinge alike words and manner in his social and more especially his domestic interests.

Certainly there had been trials and disappointments since their marriage. Lydia had been childless, and that circumstance had been

a source of deep mortification alike to her husband and her husband's uncle. Cyril certainly did not openly reproach her, but he was older in his manner and more frequent in his absences from home than he had been before the hopes of any offspring had been given up.

What was more, Mr. Ingram did not even attempt to disguise his mortification and his disappointment at the absence of heirs to his wealth, and the consequent failure of his name and a descendant to inherit and transmit his hardly amassed fortune.

"I tell you what it is," he observed one day, when either failing health or irritated spirits made this standing grievance more insupportable, and his patience exhausted, "I am not going to let my money be scattered anyhow. Now that Lydia is not going to be like other women, and give heirs properly to my fortune, I'll make another will and settle it pretty tight after Cyril's death, and during his life into the bargain. I am not altogether satisfied with his way of going on, though I daresay it is my old-fashioned notions that are as much to blame as he is. Young men are not like what they were in my time, especially when they have been in the army. I tell you, Farnley, I'll give you instructions to-morrow, if you'll come over," he said to the family lawyer, who had called on some casual business, and to whom this outburst had been addressed.

But man proposes and God disposes. Ere the morrow came Mr. Ingram was past any control over his carefully hoarded wealth. A heart disease, scarcely suspected, or else ignored, finished its subtle work with a startling suddenness, and when Mr. Farnley arrived to keep his appointment all that remained for him to do was to produce the old will, and superintend the consequent arrangements after the death of his client instead of drawing up a fresh and tighter distribution of property.

Cyril de Winton came into the money and other property that had been so long settled on and expected by him, and yet it scarcely seemed sufficient for his wants and wishes. Lydia's fortune was a myth so far as the young wife herself was concerned. How could she help it? Mr. Ingram had been her guardian, and it was his bounden duty to see that it was properly tied up for her use, but either from accident or worry or design the formality of settlements had been altogether ignored and neglected.

She had what money she required, but from whence it came she knew not. It was never given to her as her right and her undisputed income, but simply as an allowance from her husband; and by degrees that allowance became more irregular and scanty.

"You really are very extravagant, Lydia. Why, it is but the other day that I gave you fifty pounds," he said, harshly, one day, when she was forced to ask him for money to pay some necessary and most legitimate debts. It was a frequent reproach now, and Lydia was at length driven to retort.

"If I only had half the income from my own fortune I should be content, Cyril; but I cannot keep up the appearance necessary for our station and means on less than I spend," she said, firmly.

"Your fortune! Why, one would think it was a mine of wealth," he retorted, scornfully. "I am sure it is extraordinary how money goes; and besides, the old governor did not leave as much as was expected; after all, and he kept me so tight while he was alive that I had some things to cash up. You must not be so sharp, Lydia. It's what I will not stand from you or any other woman."

This was but one of many repeated scenes of this kind, and even Lydia's love and inexperience began to suspect there was something more than appeared on the surface to account for Cyril's irritable impatience and gloom.

"Cyril, what is it? Why do you conceal it from me?" she said one day, when he had been more than usually bitter and gloomy, and strange words of ominous meaning had escaped him in his troubled slumbers. "I am your wife. I have a right to share your cares and

sorrows. I can bear anything better than this suspense," she went on, laying her hand lovingly on his. "Tell me all, and let me comfort you."

"Know it then, and anathematise the knowledge since you will have it!" he exclaimed, fiercely. "I am a ruined man, and unless we are out of the country in a week from this time I shall be in a prison! Now where is your boasted fortitude?" he added, bitterly.

"You shall find it will stand the test, Cyril. I will go where you go. Only give me your confidence and tell me what I am to do for your safety and comfort."

He laughed with a cynical bitterness that she could scarcely account for even by the long experience of his temper.

"Well, you're not so bad after all, Lydia. I suppose you do love me as a husband, at any rate, though one who professed to do so in my prosperity has deserted me in my trouble. She has been my curse, that's certain!"

A fearful withering light burst in on the unfortunate wife. This then accounted for the waste of money, the absences, and the harsh alienations of her husband's love.

"Cyril, am I to understand then that—that—"

"You have had a rival. Well, yes, that's nothing so uncommon, only I got hold of a fiend, and it's no cause for jealousy now. I'm more vexed with being so taken in than anything besides. She regularly drained me, the mercenary blood-sucker, and then when she found the spring was dry, she turned round like a hyena and laughed at me," he went on, gnashing his teeth as if he were imitating the fierce and treacherous animal in question. "You are well avenged as far as she is concerned, and—I am punished for my folly!"

Did Cyril de Winton mean that a blunder was worse than a crime. It most assuredly conveyed the impression to the outraged, pure woman to whose ears he dared so openly to tell his guilt, and to make light of the wrong he had done her. Yes, much that had perplexed her was but too fatally explained. Her next words were spoken in so different a tone that even his preoccupied senses were struck with its strange composure.

"You have not yet explained what you want of me, Cyril. I presume from what you say that this 'folly' is at an end. If so, I am still willing to remain with you, and to act as your wife in all duty and obedience."

He did quail a little under the dignified and calm reproof that had yet no recrimination in its quiet sting.

"All right, Lydia. I daresay we shall knock on all the better perhaps for this bitter break in our relations," he said. "Well, then, in the first place there is a poor little remnant of your fortune that was tied on you by the will of your godmother. You must sign that away, and that will perhaps enable me to get away without exciting dangerous suspicions. And as to where we shall go, I hardly know. I think very likely to Bermuda; that will be the safest place and out of the way."

Lydia sat white and motionless for a few minutes in scorn at the utter selfishness and worthlessness of the proposal. Did the cross prick her then—Wilfred's bridal ominous gift—that was so true an emblem of the dazzling glitter that had seduced her, and the pricking torture beneath the splendid surface.

This then was the man for whom she had jilted and despised the true and noble hearted Wilfred Gascoyne; this was the rich and the distinguished and high-bred husband who was so much more suitable to the heiress than the brave old captain's son.

She had only heard vague rumours of her old lover since her marriage. Captain Gascoyne had left the neighbourhood some two years afterwards to accompany his son, as was understood, to some foreign settlement where he had obtained a good appointment, which might probably lead to still higher promotion.

But whether these reports were fully reliable or no, there was a tolerable certainty in

her own mind that Wilfred deserved and would obtain both fame and fortune. And Cyril was a beggar, and her own inheritance gone to the winds.

"What am I to do, Cyril? Is there any paper to sign? How am I to liberate this money for you?" she asked, quietly.

"Oh, the whole affair is a mere bagatelle, only a few hundreds or so, that were intended, I suppose, to buy your trousseau, or some such trifle. And the trustee has, I have found, the full power to give it to you for your own and positive use at any time after your marriage or coming of age. Of course, what is yours is really mine, according to all equity, since I am responsible for your debts and maintenance, and I don't suppose you would particularly like me to go to prison for the sake of such a beggarly sum."

"No," she said, "you are right. It is worthwhile indeed now."

"Very well, then, the matter is easy enough to settle. Your trustee, Mr. Harding, is now living at Shanklin, in the Isle of Wight, and as we shall sail from Southampton, you can easily go to him at once and arrange the affair. And to make matters safer still, you had better make all the arrangements as if you were coming back here after a few weeks. It will disarm suspicion, you see."

She did not reply, she had to think of such a tide of terrible and pressing circumstances that came flooding on her brain ere she could take in these wholesale directions.

"At the same time you had better send all the valuables that you can take away with you without being noticed, and any clothes you can pack without suspicion. I shall go from London, you can join me at Southampton from Hyde, which is close to where your trustee lives."

She started, absolutely started as he spoke.

"But there are things to be settled, Cyril; there are servants and tradesmen, we cannot go away without settling our debts, you know," she said, in a resolute tone.

"You will have plenty to do with your money I can tell you without wasting it in that fashion," said her husband, sharply. "And besides it would excite remarks; you must not attempt it, Lydia."

The wife raised her head proudly from its downcast depression.

"No, Cyril, that cannot be—it is impossible. As I have the means the debts shall be paid, even if I suffer afterwards. I will do anything but that," she said, firmly.

"And you would disobey me, you would rebel against my commands," he said, fiercely.

"Yes, I will only obtain the money on that condition," she said, positively.

His lips moved in what was terribly like an imprecation, but he changed it to a bitter laugh as he returned:

"Oh, very well, you can choose between the two; I shall be off in any case, and if you like me to go alone you must do as you can; if not, I tell you again we shall want all, and more than all we can make. Choose, Lydia, for time is pressing," he added, impatiently.

What could she do in that strife between duty and honour and lingering love for the unworthy one? Suddenly the idea flashed across her mind that she had some jewels which had never yet been worn in her husband's presence, and whose very existence she believed him to be ignorant of, since they were in the repose that they had enjoyed since her mother's days.

They were antiquated in the setting, and as the gifts of her husband and her guardian and family had gotten her case to overflowing, she had either from that circumstance or the sacredness of their associations, kept them utterly concealed from view. Her good angel had dictated the reserve, for now the diamonds so carefully hoarded would avail to save her conscience from dishonour and those to whom the money was due from disappointment and misery.

"You shall have the money then," she said, a trifle of bitterness mingled with her sweet tones. "Be content, Cyril, I shall obey your best."

And she quietly turned the conversation to the necessary preparations for the change that was before them.

### CHAPTER III.

THE steamer had arrived in safety at the island which was to be a haven of safety to the fugitives. Yes, fugitives, though from what Lydia scarcely knew. Only from debt, she believed; and yet there were times when the haggard look and the unnatural excitement of her husband's manner deepened her alarm lest there could be a yet more terrible cause for the gloom and bitterness that pervaded his whole manner.

Still, as they neared their destination, and the voyage bade fair to be performed in an unusually short space of time, his spirits appeared to rise with the prospect. His old grace and vivacity of manner returned to him; he even resumed those old caressing ways towards Lydia that had won her heart in days of yore, and he became the most popular man among the passengers. On landing they repaired to the nearest lodging they could obtain, so different to any Lydia had known, but such as would have excited her interest and pleasure under happier and less engrossing circumstances.

"At last," he murmured—"at last I am safe. I can be at peace."

Lydia listened in troubled silence. There must surely be something worse than mere debt and difficulty to affect him thus. It was of course a danger and mortifying anxiety for him to be thus involved after the liberal fortune that had been twice his possession, but even that could scarcely explain the agony and its intense relief which were thus betrayed by her husband's manner.

But she dared not ask any questions, and when the sound of steps announced the approach of the bearers of the luggage she gladly sprang forward to occupy herself and banish the thought to which she dared not give vent. There was a little procession formed by the men carrying the luggage, but only one remained after the others had deposited their burdens upon the ground.

"Are you to take the money, my good man?" asked Cyril, putting his hand into his pocket for his purse. "Probably you undertake the affair for the whole lot?"

"Oh, yes, I shall spare you any further trouble, Mr. de Winton," returned the man, sarcastically. "I have waited for you for some time. There is a warrant out against you for uttering forged notes of hand and cheques, which will oblige you to return to England by the next steamer, I expect."

Cyril gave vent to a despairing oath. Lydia sank down on the nearest couch, faint and cold, but not insensible. She was only too keenly alive to the full horrors of her position, and what was far more worse to bear, to her husband's guilt and unworthiness. Cyril was the first to recover his self-possession.

"I demand to see your warrant," he said. "I shall not submit to its execution unless it is perfectly legal in its form. It will need the signature of the authorities here, and for you to prove that I am identical with the man mentioned here, and of whom you are in search."

"Oh, you need not trouble yourself, my dear sir, to teach me my duty," said the man, drily. "I can promise you that it is all formal and legal enough. There, you see, it is signed by the governor of the island, Sir Wilfred Gascoyne; you can see it, if you please. I'm not going to be hard on a gentleman who has got into trouble."

Cyril glanced carelessly at the document. He was but too certain of its genuineness and power over him, and he abruptly handed it back; but Lydia awoke suddenly from her somnambulist dream and darted to the spot where the two men stood.

"Let me see," she said—"let me see." If it was to satisfy herself as to the name of him who would have some power over her wretched husband the doubt was quickly re-

moved. It was signed "Wilfred Gascoyne" in the fine, bold characters she knew so well. What a contrast between the felon and the judge—the ruined spendthrift and the successful aspirant to fame and fortune! Assuredly the cross pricked once more the bosom on which it rested, but she made no sign, and perhaps Cyril did not immediately associate the name of his future judge and his rival, of whom he had but a comparatively slight knowledge.

The terrible forms were soon concluded, however, and Cyril de Winton was fain to submit to the carrying out of the law without resistance. And Lydia remained alone and desolate to think, if thought were possible, over all that awaited her, and on her bounden duty to the worthless husband to whom she was still bound by her bridal vows.

The governor of — Island was sitting in the shaded and airy room where his more private business was transacted. His head was resting on his hand, his eyes fixed on the fair prospect on the open verandah, or rather, perhaps, on vacancy, for it was extremely doubtful whether he could have mentioned a feature in the landscape before him. A sternly suppressed passion was on his well controlled features—the expression of one accustomed to conceal his own inner feelings. Suddenly his reverie was disturbed by one of his domestics with the announcement, "A lady to see you, sir," and before the permission could be granted or denied the man was gently pushed aside, and a female glided into the room.

"I wish for a few minutes in private," she said, in a voice that had a strange sweetness in its very constraint.

She waited till the servant had closed the door, and then she hastily threw back her veil and stood face to face with the grave and unyielding man from whom she hoped so much, and, it might be, so wildly.

"Wilfred Gascoyne, am I so changed that you do not know me?" she said, sadly.

"I believe I am speaking to Mrs. Cyril de Winton?" he said, calmly. "What singular necessity can induce her to seek me?" he added, bitterly.

"You are speaking to a most miserable and wretched woman," she exclaimed, with a choking and desperate vehemence. "Wilfred, your curse has done its work, and I have wept tears of blood at the wounds it has inflicted. It was but justice, I confess, now I am come to ask for mercy at your hands."

Sir Wilfred listened with unproved exterior.

"I understand you, Mrs. de Winton: you are now in trouble and, therefore, you turn to me—me, whom you once scorned and crushed. It is the way of the world—of woman's world—I suppose, and I need not be surprised even if it does not quite accord with my ideas of the justice, or, perhaps, dignity of the pleader."

"Oh, that is yours—yours," she exclaimed, throwing herself at his feet in agony that could no longer be restrained. "I ask for mercy, not justice—mercy for my misguided, miserable husband. Taunt me at your will, you cannot humble me more than my present degradation; reproach me, you cannot add to penitence. Only listen to my prayer and I will go away and never offend your eyes by my presence more."

"Rise, Mrs. de Winton, calm yourself, and tell me what you really want with me," said Sir Wilfred, in a softer tone. "You can scarcely wonder if I cannot forget the past so abruptly."

"I know—I know, but yet, Wilfred, I was led away by foolish ambition and weakness, and by the influence of others, not from want of love or esteem for you—I was not false, but I was dazzled and fickle. I was impatient at the slow ordeal that awaited me, and thus I injured your peace and ruined my own. I have repented, oh, so deeply. I have repented but once, and that has been for ever," she said, sadly.

"Yet you love him still—you plead for him?"

"He is my husband; my duty is to him, my vow was for sorrow and sickness, misery and death. Wilfred, he is accused of a dreadful crime, he is in prison; your name is on the warrant, you can save him. Oh, for the sake of the past—for the sake of our childhood—our old love, Wilfred, have mercy on me in my sore need."

The tears were flowing down her cheeks, and her voice was trembling in all its sweetness, and few men could have resisted that still lovely and broken-hearted creature in her crushing, sore grief.

"The crime is forgery, I remember. Is all your fortune gone, then, Mrs. de Winton?" he resumed, "and his?"

"All; but that is only a just punishment. It is the shame and disgrace that bows me to the very earth. It is but proper retribution for me to lose what was the degrading cause of my treachery to you, and to my better self, Wilfred."

"I can do very little if anything to save you or your husband," he said. "It were treason to my duty to let him escape were such a proceeding possible; and besides, he must be tried in the country the crime was committed in, and where justice will certainly be rendered to him, whether guilty or innocent. But this much I will risk for the sake of the past, Lydia. I will myself examine the proofs of his guilt, and, if necessary or needful, I will give him the means of defence afterwards. And also, while he is in the island he shall be as leniently treated as possible. For yourself you had better have apartments in the Government House while you remain. My housekeeper will take care you are comfortable, and you will be as completely secluded there as in a lodging or hotel."

Lydia comprehended in a moment the delicate consideration that thus spared her the rude curiosity and contempt which the felon's wife might encounter without such shelter, but she dared not give way to her gratitude while Wilfred remained so cold and severe.

"Heaven reward you," uttered in a low tone, and a quiet preparation to leave the governor's presence alone acknowledged his concessions to her prayer.

"One minute, Mrs. de Winton, and I will give the necessary orders," he said, hastily.

The bell was rung, a few brief words made known his wishes to the domestics, and then Lydia was ushered to a comfortable apartment.

Two days passed away. Lydia had once, but only once, visited her husband in his confinement in prison, which had been divested of some of its hardships by the governor's orders for indulgence to the accused. But Cyril little appreciated the kindness that so far came short of the one great requirement of his selfish nature—liberty and exemption from the penalty of his crime.

"It's like curing a sick man to hang him afterwards," he said, bitterly. "No doubt this upstart Gascoyne will enjoy seeing the full measure of humiliation that can be put upon me, but he may be disappointed yet," he added, with a sardonic laugh.

"You mean that you will be able to prove your innocence, Cyril dear," said his wife, carelessly.

"Oh, yes, of course—yes," he returned, sharply.

And Lydia was afraid to risk any further revelations by pressing him on the subject so vital to her peace. It was the morning after that interview, and Lydia had risen from her broken slumbers, that were ever haunted by visions of past and present luxury, and passed into the adjoining sitting-room, when Wilfred Gascoyne entered, his face paler and more rigid than when she had last seen him in that memorable interview.

"Mrs. de Winton," he said, after exchanging the brief courtesies of morning greeting, "I am come to give you a yet deeper sorrow," he said, gently, taking her hand and looking at her with something of the tenderness of former years. "I have just heard news of your unfortunate husband that will tax all

your fortitude. "Can you be brave?" he said, as he felt her hand tremble in his.

"Speak! What is it? To be condemned? Is his guilt certain?" she asked, gaspingly.

"He is beyond human judgment," Lydia! he said, naming at last the old familiar name. "He is under the verdict of a merciful Judge, Lydia; he has dared his fate. Great Heaven, have pity on the rash madness of the deed."

Lydia stared wildly in his face, as if to take in the full meaning of his words, and then she fell senseless in his arms. Wilfred Gascoyne once more held her to his breast, once more bent down and pressed his lips to the pale brow, and then the self-control so long maintained gave way, and tears—many, convulsive, heartfelt tears fell on her cold white cheeks.

If he had desired vengeance he had obtained it now, and vengeance all irrespective of one deed or word or thought of his. But he had not sought it. He was too true and noble of heart to have usurped in his own hands the great prerogative of the Almighty.

Eighteen months have passed away since that terrible catastrophe. The long illness that it had brought on Lydia de Winton was succeeded by a period of exhaustion and collapse of mental or bodily energy that might well have taxed the patience of the most loving and devoted of husbands.

And during that period Wilfred Gascoyne had watched over her in person and by deputy. He had humoured every caprice, soothed every depressed plaint, and cheered the prostrate nerves, till at length his untiring efforts were rewarded by the restoration of the stricken one to health of mind and body. Then, and not till then, did he speak the cherished wish of his soul.

"Lydia, you have suffered; you are alone, and we have endured long years of desolate solitude of mind and body. Will you be mine at last? Will you fulfil our early hopes? Blot out the sad years that have intervened, and let us forget but that we are the once plighted lovers, the true and sincere friends of childhood and youth," he added, earnestly.

The sorrowing, penitent woman literally shrank down and shivered under the blessed words. She felt so unworthy of that noble man, who could pardon and forget the deep wrongs he had suffered.

"Oh, Wilfred, Wilfred, spare my weakness. I am so unfit to be your wife. I have been so vain and treacherous, so false. Leave me to my fate. It is too blessed a prospect. You deserve the best and the noblest of women—not my erring self."

"My Lydia has the power if she has the will to make me happy," he said, fondly. "I have never loved; I never can love any woman but yourself. Lydia, let us fight together with all that is mean or unworthy in our souls. Let us find rest and peace in perfect lives."

And Lydia sank in his arms and wept out her gratitude and penitence on his shoulder in vows that her whole future life was devoted to fulfil. And Wilfred never repented the fiery ordeal that had given him a wife purified and ennobled by long years of suffering. S. D.

#### NATURAL LANGUAGE OF THE HANDS.

THE hand has a great share in expressing our thoughts and feelings; raising the hands towards Heaven with the palms united, expresses devotion and supplication; wringing them, grief; throwing them towards Heaven, admiration; dejected hands, despair and amazement; folding them, idleness; holding the fingers intermingled, musing and thoughtfulness; holding them forth together, yielding and submission; lifting them and the eyes to Heaven, a solemn appeal; waving the hand from us, prohibition; extending the right hand to any one, peace, piety, and safety; scratching the

head, care and perplexing thought; laying the right hand on the heart, affection and solemn affirmation; holding up the thumb, approbation; placing the right forefinger perpendicularly on the lips, bidding silence.

#### DOOMED TO SILENCE.

THE germ of a novel is contained in events that occurred in a Russian town. Twenty years ago a church organist stole the priest's pistol, shot and robbed a farmer, replaced the weapon in the sacristy, confessed the crime to the priest, whose lips were thus sealed upon the subject, and then denounced him as the robber and assassin. The unfortunate ecclesiastic, vainly protesting his innocence, was sentenced to hard labour for life. The organist on his death-bed confessed this crime, but when steps were taken to secure the liberation of the innocent sufferer it was found that he had been dead for several months. This real-life tragedy fairly mates the real life comedy of the fine young English gentleman who, having been arrested for robbing a post-office, married the postmistress, the only witness against him, who was thus precluded from testifying against her husband.

## VIOLA HARCOURT;

OR,

### PLAYING WITH HEARTS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Evander," "Templing Fortune," etc., etc.

#### CHAPTER XXXVIII.

It was with difficulty that Conyers got along. He had no defined idea of where he was going to. His intention was to stand still somewhere and beg. If his wife could not get work he must ask alms. What else could he do? Before he had gone far he felt himself come in contact with somebody, and was very nearly knocked down.

"Where are you going to, my good fellow?" exclaimed a voice.

"I am blind, sir," he replied.

"Blind! You don't look like it. But if you are you ought not to be out alone. How long have you been blind?"

"Only a few months," replied Herbert.

"Humph! Take my arm—so. I am an eye doctor. Come to my house, which is only a short distance off. I should like to examine your case."

Herbert gladly took his arm, and together they walked along the street together. During the journey the doctor put to him a variety of questions, and he told him his story without any reservation.

"What!" said the doctor. "Are you the husband of Viola Sutton? Upon my word, I am glad of this meeting, for I do not believe there is a greater scoundrel in existence than Lord Tarlington."

"I say nothing against anybody," replied Herbert. "But my wife is an angel, if there ever was one on earth, and she has been cruelly treated."

They reached the doctor's house and entered the surgery, when the doctor, whose name was Danvers, and who had made the diseases of the eye his especial study, placed him in a chair. After a minute examination the doctor said:

"Have you the courage to undergo a painful operation?"

"I have courage enough to undergo anything if it will enable me to get back my sight and work for Viola," answered Herbert.

"Very well. Sit quite still. I have great hopes that I shall effect a cure in your case."

These words of Dr. Danvers, spoken in a

confident tone, reassured Herbert, and he was fully prepared to undergo a martyrdom if it would in any way benefit him and his beloved.

The doctor expressed an opinion that they were not diseased or damaged in any way, but that the cold which had seized upon him subsequent to the cerebral fever had caused a film to grow over the pupils, and if that could be removed the sight would be immediately restored. In order to effect this, the greatest nicety was necessary, for if the knife was to touch the pupils, the eyes would be ruined for ever.

With the utmost delicacy Dr. Danvers lifted up the white film and caused it to peel off, without causing Herbert any pain whatever. To his infinite joy he found himself able to see without any difficulty, and the same operation being performed on the other eye, with equal success, he was perfectly restored to sight, within an hour from entering the surgery. His feelings can be more easily imagined than described.

"Now, my friend," exclaimed the doctor, "you can tell that I did not make a vain boast when I said that I knew something about the eyes."

Herbert raised the worthy man's hand to his lips and kissed it, while tears of gratitude flowed from those formerly sightless orbs.

"I can never repay you," he replied. "But the devotion of a life shall be yours, and if your charge is a hundred guineas, I will let you have it by degrees."

"Nay, I make no charge. What profession were you before you became blind?" said Dr. Danvers, who seemed to have taken a strong personal interest in Herbert.

"I am a poor man now," Herbert answered; very poor. Once I was well off, and I hope now that I can practice I shall make money again, for I am like yourself, a member of the medical profession. My name is Conyers."

"Bless me! I knew a gentleman of that name. We were students together in the same hospital, and passed out in the same class together. I believe the Conyers I knew is practising in London."

"That must be my father," cried Herbert.

"Indeed! I am glad to make the acquaintance of his son and still more pleased to have been able to be of service to him," replied Dr. Danvers, adding, thoughtfully, "I think I understood you to say that you were doing nothing now?"

"Unfortunately, it is too true."

"Suppose I make you an offer. You are a regularly qualified medical practitioner. My business is growing so large that I cannot look after it as I should like, and I have therefore thought for some time past of engaging an assistant. If you please you can come and live in my house and I will pay you a liberal salary. What do you say?"

"You overwhelm me with kindness," replied Herbert, overjoyed at his good fortune. "First you give me light, then you give me life, by furnishing me with the means of getting my living. I accept your offer willingly, and you shall never have cause to regret having made it."

Viola had returned home, and finding Herbert had disappeared, she was in a state of anxious solicitude about him. For some days past he had been in a despondent mood, and she feared lest he might think himself too much of a burden upon her, and seek to end his woes in suicide.

When he came bounding in with an elastic step into the little room they occupied and going straight up to her, caught her in his arms and kissed her tenderly, she could scarcely believe the evidence of her senses, for she was accustomed to see him move about with halting, uncertain steps, putting out his hands to feel his way, and looking to her for that support which she always willingly afforded him.

"What is this, Herbert?" she cried; "has the age of miracles returned?"

"God has been good to me, my darling," he replied. "My prayers have been heard and answered, fate has decreed that I should be no longer a clog upon you."

"But your sight? How did you get it back?"

He told her how he went out into the street to beg, and how he met the kind doctor, who had, in a truly Christian spirit, operated upon him and given him a situation, on hearing which Viola became so deeply affected that she nearly fainted away.

Their hearts were filled with gratitude, and in that moment of supreme bliss they mingled their tears of joy together. It was like a stranded voyager being suddenly transported from the sterile, ice-bound regions of the Arctic seas to the fertile plains of the sunny tropics. The transformation was complete they would weep no more.

The next day they removed to Dr. Danvers' house, where they were provided with comfortable rooms. They boarded with the doctor and his wife and certainly lived in the land of plenty, if they were not actually in the lap of luxury. Dr. Danvers kindly advanced Herbert three months' salary, with which he bought Viola and himself the clothes they stood in need of, and he at once entered on his duties as the doctor's assistant.

"Do you regret Tarlington Hall, dearest?" asked Herbert one evening, as he lovingly entwined his arm around his little wife's waist.

"I regret nothing, my own, since I have you," she replied, returning the affectionate pressure of his hand.

It was the height of the season in London. Regent Street was crowded with carriages and pedestrians, as it always is on an afternoon. Two men emerged from a side street, and mingled with the bustling throng on the gay thoroughfare. They were Dubois and Sandford Newton, who were engaged in a search for a foreigner who was passing forged Russian rouble notes in London.

Their keen gaze scrutinised every face they passed, but they walked from the top to the bottom of the street without finding any trace of the person they were looking for. All at once they saw a lady, elegantly dressed, and having a wealth of blonde hair, enter one of the fashionable linendraper's shops. Dubois pressed his companion's arm.

"I ought to know that face?" he remarked.

"So ought I," replied Sandford. "I have a glimmering idea of having seen it somewhere before. Who does it remind you of?"

"Miss Agnew," exclaimed Dubois.

"But she is dark and this one is fair."

"Very true, yet there are such things as blonde wigs, my dear fellow, which can be bought and made to alter a person's appearance wonderfully. Stay here until she comes out, we will soon clear the matter up."

Satisfying themselves that there was only one door to the establishment, and that she must therefore come out the way she went in, they posted themselves on each side of the entrance and patiently waited for her to appear. They had not long to wait. The lady had only gone in to make some trifling purchase, with which in her hand she made her appearance.

"I thought we should meet," said Dubois.

"The world is so large and yet so small."

Miss Agnew, for it was she, dropped the parcel she held in her hand, and eluding Dubois' grasp, darted like an arrow across the street, which, as we have said, was crowded with vehicles of every description.

"Heavens!" cried Dubois, "she will be under the wheels of that carriage. No, the horses' heads just grazed her shoulder. Now she will be run down by that bus. By George, the driver pulled up in time. Ha! that hansom has done the business. She is down!"

There was a piercing scream, followed by loud shouts. The traffic stopped as if by magic: a woman had been run over. Strong men went into the street, and out of the mire they picked up a female form which they carried to the pavement and laid on the step of a door.

Sandford Newton and Dubois had witnessed

the accident. Miss Agnew had been knocked down by a cab-horse and the wheel had subsequently gone over her fragile form, which was dreadfully mangled. They crossed the street, and, pushing their way through the crowd, saw that her face was covered with blood, and from her eyes being closed, she had evidently fainted from excess of pain.

A cab was procured and the inanimate body placed inside, and they drove to the hospital. Here the house-surgeon informed them that the cranium was injured, the right leg fractured in two places, and three ribs broken, besides internal injuries.

"Will she live?" demanded Sandford.

"It is possible; her injuries will not kill her necessarily. It is the shock to the system which generally carries them off in these cases."

"We are detectives," said Sandford, "and it is important that we should obtain a confession from her if possible."

"You cannot converse with her now," replied the surgeon; "call to-morrow, and if it is safe, I will allow you an interview with her."

They departed, much shocked at the terrible nature of the injuries which had so suddenly befallen the unfortunate woman, but pleased, for Viola's sake, that they had got her in their power. They hoped that she would not die without making a confession of her guilt. If she did, Viola's last chance was gone, because Madame Menzies could never be made to speak and criminate herself. Everything depended upon Miss Agnew. For some time she remained in a critical condition, so much so as to create the greatest apprehension in the mind of Sandford Newton. When she became conscious and was able to converse he was permitted to see her.

"I am so sorry this should have happened," he exclaimed.

"Thank you for your sympathy," she replied. "It was the sight of you and that odious Dubois, whom I hate, that made me run across the street. Madame Menzies—Lady Tarlington, I mean—and I am good friends now. She pays me well for keeping silence, and I did not wish to betray her. Now I care little for anything. They tell me I shall be a life-long cripple, if I ever rise from this bed. And my face, oh! heaven. I thought myself pretty once, but they showed me a glass yesterday, and my word, how I am changed! I should not have known myself."

"Don't you think it a judgment upon you, Miss Agnew, for the cruel way in which you have treated Viola?" asked Sandford.

"I have no ill-feeling towards her. What I did was a matter of business. I was paid for it, that is all. Let me ask you a question: when you place a criminal in gaol and cause misery to his wife and family, do you feel any pang of regret? No. You receive your pay and your conscience is clear."

"Perhaps so," replied Sandford. "But your case is different. Think of the hereafter. You will be punished for what you have done. Why not make amends? Madame Menzies is nothing to you; you cannot rely upon her. Why not confess all, and throw yourself upon the clemency of Mrs. Conyers? Viola is not hard-hearted, and I am sure she would do something for you."

Miss Agnew was much affected by the appeal which Sandford made to her. The pain she had gone through, and her residence in the hospital had quickened her thoughts. Already remorse was gnawing at her heart.

"Come and see me again," said Miss Agnew. "I cannot decide what I shall do yet."

So Sandford Newton left her to her conscience, which he judged was newly awakened, and he waited patiently for her to make some sign. Her illness was a long one, she had ample time to reflect upon her mispent life. All day long she looked at the texts on the walls and thought over them.

While in this condition, half wishing, half fearing, to send for Sandford Newton and make a clean breast of it, a clergyman who visited the hospital came and spoke kindly to her. He spoke of the sweet consolation of religion, and

of the all-saving mercy of Him, who died upon the cross.

She listened attentively. The seed was sown and brought forth good fruit. She told the minister of the gospel that she had something on her mind. He did not seek to make her confess, but he advised her to make reparation for any wrong she had done, or she could neither find peace and comfort in this world nor happiness in the next. Fully convinced that she would not be happy unless she told the truth, she despatched a note to Sandford Newton asking him to come and see her.

He went without delay to the hospital, finding Miss Agnew in the same helpless condition. She was very pale and calm; by her side lay a bible which she had been reading attentively.

"Sit down, my friend," she exclaimed; "a great change has come over me. Thanks to the ministrations of a clergyman who has been kind enough to talk to me, I have seen the error of my ways, and I shall not be happy until I have done justice to that sweet, long-suffering girl whom I so cruelly ill-used. Get a magistrate and let me unburden my heart. I cannot pray with any satisfaction while this terrible secret oppresses me."

Sandford at once went in search of a magistrate, who came and heard her confession, which she swore to and signed. Fitzharding Sutton was arrested at the Duke's Club. He could not obtain bail, but he contrived to despatch a telegram to his brother in Paris, apprising him of Miss Agnew's confession and the serious consequences it entailed.

Sandford wrote to Herbert Conyers acquainting him with what had happened, and hoping that in a very short time Viola would once more be installed as mistress of Tarlington Chase. Then, accompanied by Dubois, he started for Paris, to perform the congenial task of arresting his lordship and his shameless wife.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### RETRIBUTION.

AFTER the discovery respecting his wife which Lord Tarlington had made, it may be readily imagined that his respect for her did not increase, but so great was the power that she had over him that he could not leave her. Her ladyship insisted upon retaining her position in the fashionable world, and there was no end to her excesses.

She and her slavish husband had returned from a grand ball when the telegram sent by Fitzharding Sutton arrived. They had just finished supper, his lordship had been drinking more than usual, and his face was flushed from the effects of wine.

His countenance fell as he read the telegram, he advanced to the door, locked it and put the key in his pocket. The expression of his face was such that Lady Tarlington grew alarmed. It was the reflection of an abyssmal despair mingled with a fierce determination.

"What are you doing?" asked her ladyship. "And what does that despatch contain that you should be so perturbed?"

"I am arranging the death scene," he said, with a grim smile.

"Are you mad?" she demanded, in terrified accents.

"Perhaps I am," he answered, pressing his hand to his head as if it pained him. "Heaven knows I have had enough to make me become so. This telegram informs me that Miss Agnew has confessed all. The police are now on our track. Fitzharding is already in prison. The meshes of the net in which we are caught cannot be broken."

Lady Tarlington's terror increased. She sprang from the sofa.

"If that is the case," she exclaimed, "let us fly. Why are we staying here? Why do you waste a moment—are you becoming idiotic? We have yet time to save ourselves. Fly, fly to the ends of the earth."

"And what should we be able to live upon?"

Viola will take all from us. I have absolutely nothing; my account at the bank is overdrawn. It will be a week yet before my steward sends in the rents. Your extravagance has kept me without a penny. At my age and brought up as I have been I cannot work. Starvation is objectionable. I prefer to die."

"Let me tell you that I do not. Idiot," hissed her ladyship, "do you think I will tamely fall in with such a craven view of the situation? Never! Die if you like, I will live."

Lord Tarlington bent a fierce, wolfish glance upon her.

"You will die with me," he replied. "Make your peace with Heaven."

The wretched woman saw that his mind had evidently given way beneath the shock, and she feared for what might happen to herself. It was not that she was concerned for him. She was entirely selfish, and all her fear for her own person. Throwing herself at his feet, she seized his hands in hers.

"You are not—you cannot be in earnest," she cried. "Oh, no, I will not believe it. Tell me that you are trifling with me, my own beloved. Could you condemn to death the woman you have so often told that she is more precious to you than anything upon earth? Kiss me, Arthur—kiss me. Look, I am begging for the old dear law."

He turned away his head and cast her rudely from him. He was deaf to the voice of the charmer, though she charmed never so wisely. She remained on her knees gazing after him, watching his every movement with lynxlike anxiety. She saw him go into their bedroom, which adjoined the sitting-room, and take up a small brazier which contained charcoal.

He placed this on the table and lighted it with some paper and a match. Then she knew what his purpose was. It was a deadly one! The fumes arose at first slowly from the brazier which contained the charcoal, afterwards ascending in a steady volume of smoke which gradually pervaded the apartment.

She was well aware that a favourite method of committing suicide among the Parisians is to stop every hole and crevice in the room and light charcoal, the fumes of which will in time bring about unconsciousness and ultimately death. Frantic with fear, she sprang to her feet, ran to the door, and tried to open it. Finding that it resisted all her efforts, she began to scream loudly. This brought him to her side.

"Peace!" he said, "or I shall do you some violence! Do you want me to gag you?"

"But this is murder! You will kill me. Already I feel the smoke suffocating me. I cannot breathe. For pity's sake let me out. Will you not spare me, darling? Dearest husband, think of what you are doing."

"I have thought," in a stony voice which sounded like the knell of doom.

"Wait till to-morrow—until you are calm. Reflect. Sleep over it. If you decide to die to-morrow, I will not murmur, but cheerfully perish with you!"

He pushed her back upon the sofa and placed his hand over her mouth, so that she could not scream, holding her in an iron-like grip meanwhile with the other. Her struggles were violent and continuous, but she could not effect anything against him. He was too strong for her to contend against. It seemed as if his strength was augmented by the sudden frenzy of madness which had taken possession of him.

The lights appeared to burn more dimly, and a thick smoke pervaded the apartment. It was as if the room was filled by the incense swung out from an unseen censer. Lady Tarlington's struggles ceased, her eyes closed. She breathed with difficulty, and the sleep from which there was no awakening crept over her, holding her fast in what was the icy embraces of death.

Lord Tarlington resisted longest. He did not remove his hand from his victim's mouth until he was so affected by the smoke that he began to stagger. Unable to bear the subtle influence of the charcoal any longer, he reeled and fell upon the floor. The cool air coming from underneath the door revived him partially.

Raising himself on his hands and knees he crawled to the lounge on which his wife was lying insensible, and by an effort raised his head on a level with hers, when he kissed her parted lips, saluting the ayren who had enchained him and whom he held dear even in his last moments.

The destroying vapour again entered his lungs and confused his brain. He fell down upon the floor a second time never to rise again. The tragedy was complete. Retribution had overtaken the guilty pair. Terrible, sudden and complete as was their end, no one can say that it was not deserved, and perhaps Lord Tarlington of two evils had chosen the least.

It was not until about eight o'clock the next morning that the dreadful tragedy was discovered. Sandford Newton and Dubois arrived by the night mail, proceeding at once to the hotel where Lord and Lady Tarlington were known to be staying. The servants ushered them upstairs, and being unable to open the door, broke it down, when the terrible spectacle of the two dead bodies was presented.

"They have escaped the hand of Justice," exclaimed Sandford. "Still I am avenged. That hand which is still in death will strike no more blows."

"I am more interested in the female," said Dubois. "She was a remarkable woman. If I could have put in evidence all I know against her, she would have passed the rest of her life in prison."

The event created a profound impression in Paris owing to the position of the parties and the luxury, of an ostentatious nature, in which they lived. A plain funeral was given them, and after their bodies were laid in the grave the affair was forgotten.

Sandford and Dubois returned to London. There was nothing more for them to do on the Continent. Viola and Herbert were able to take peaceful possession of Tarlington Hall. Fitzharding Sutton was sentenced to a long term of imprisonment, and Miss Agnew, when she left the hospital, was a cripple and confirmed invalid.

With her natural good-heartedness, Viola returned good for evil by making the unhappy creature an allowance which saved her from want. She also gave Sandford and Dubois a handsome sum of money for the assistance they had rendered her.

Herbert Conyers gave up his profession. There is little need for a man whose wife has a fortune of ever so many thousand pounds sterling a year to work, so he settled down as a country gentleman and looked after the estate. After a while he was asked to go into Parliament, and did so in order that his devoted wife might be associated with all the political celebrities, to know whom is a high honour, and in addition to this he made his mark in the House of Commons, gaining a reputation which made Viola more proud of him than ever.

A more attached or loving couple never existed, and when their union was blessed with children, they were the happiest people in the world. After the storm came the calm. They had suffered together, and a merciful Providence decreed that they should rejoice together. Sandford Newton and Lucy were always welcome guests at the Hall, and among their numerous acquaintances there were no two persons whom Herbert Conyers and his wife liked better than them. The husbands understood their wives, and the wives their husbands, as they had learnt wisdom and were done with "Playing with Hearts."

[THE END.]

When the tenants on a large estate between Tralee and Killarney forwarded a request to the agent that he would remit the whole of the September gale of rent, the agent urbanely replied that "if the tenants would kindly remit him the rent first, he would see about it." No second communication has yet been received from the tenants.



[SPEAKING HIS MIND.]

### ETHEL'S TRIAL.

"THE crash must come—it is inevitable!" These words rang in the ears of Ethel Wyndham. She could still see her father's face as it looked when he spoke them, could still hear the desperate calmness of his voice. Beyond the idea bound up in that sentence there evidently existed nothing for him. When one's whole earthly interest can be thus expressed in a few words, the mind is in a dangerous state.

Mr. Wyndham had two idols, but just now one absorbed the other. Business, being nearer his mental view, engrossed his attention almost completely, shutting out his daughter from his thoughts. Illness and wretchedness are proverbially selfish.

So Mr. Wyndham, loving his daughter as he never had loved anything else on earth, lost sight of his love for her in the misery of coming ruin. And, in that long conversation between the two, during which Ethel shuddered to think with what happy carelessness she had been sporting on the brink of that terrible precipice, commercial ruin, Mr. Wyndham showed that in the future he saw no faintest gleam of hope, nothing worth living for.

"And I am less to him than his business," thought Ethel, with a pang. "Does no one in the world love me?"

Then came a swift heart-beat that sent a rosy

glow to her cheek, which paled again as that heart sank back, heavy as lead. The blow that seemed to her so sudden had been impending for months and years, her father told her, yet he had never revealed it to his nearest and dearest, but had lived on, from day to day, with this sword hanging over his head, ready to fall at any moment.

"Oh, why were you so cruelly kind to me, father?" she entreated. "Why could not I have helped to bear the burden and grown accustomed to it? Now—now—" Her voice failed of utterance.

"Until the last I hoped to avert it—hoped against hope. I wished my daughter to retain her place in society."

"But, papa, what do I care for society in comparison with this? I have been so extravagant, so frivolous it seems to me now—and this very night I was going to a party. I could at least have avoided expending money to which I had no honest right."

The merchant winced; Ethel saw it.

"Oh, I did not mean—" but her father interrupted her.

"Ethel, it is my desire that you go to this party, as you had intended."

"Do not ask it, papa, I cannot."

"Not if I request it? not if I say that I earnestly desire it? You shall tell me about it to-morrow," forcing a smile. "And now go and dress. Be your very gayest to-night; don't let the world guess you are a bankrupt's daughter."

He had kissed her fondly and she had gone to her room, but as it was not yet time to dress, she dismissed the maid, who looked curiously at her mistress's pale face as she closed the door, her quick French perception divining that something unusual had occurred.

How Ethel loathed the bright, gauzy fabric that she was to wear. There it lay, spread out on the bed, seeming to radiate a blue lustre from its sheeny folds. She had revelled in beautiful colours, but now she thought how gladly she would have worn the sombrest hue.

"Henceforth I will wear nothing but black," she said to herself. "I will dress as plainly as I can; I will hide the beauty I have prized so much."

By degrees her ideas grew calmer. Her brain seemed paralysed before, but now she began to think what this ruin meant to her. A withdrawal from society, few dresses, and money earned to pay for those; in short, poverty. Yes, and something more.

Something that gave bitterness to the whole, a renunciation of happiness, happiness which meant love. Among the crowd of admirers that besieged the beauty and heiress were two who dared to call themselves her lovers: John Some and Gerard Mabury. Both would have given much to look into her heart as she herself to-night was doing. Her unconscious mental estimate of them, put into words, would run something like this wise:

"John Some, good, wealthy, manly; Gerard Mabury, poor, neither true nor constant, but handsome and most fascinating. I ought to love John Some; he is good, and he loves me; he is wealthy, and would give me a home even more luxurious than this one; but, if he were poor, he would not mind my loss of fortune. Gerard Mabury loves me as well as it is in his nature to love, but he could never stand the test of poverty," and she smiled, in spite of herself, at the incongruity of Gerard Mabury and any but luxurious surroundings. "He will marry an heiress," she thought. "He was born to wealth, and though, like me, he has lost it, he cannot live without long."

And she blushed, with a feeling of shame, to think how gladly she could have passed her life with him under any circumstances, amid any surroundings.

In past times she had wished for some test of his love, but now that such had come, she was resolved never to put him to it. She would go far away, where, even if he desired it, he could not find her. And John Some?

"Marry him," urged pride. "You will retain your position in society; you can gratify your idlest whim, your most extravagant tastes."

"And speak a lie at the altar, and live a lie through life. No, I will be true to myself, first of all, however hard poverty may be."

Looking at her watch, she saw that in thus musing time had flown fast, so she rung for Lisette, who entered with the same covert glance of scrutiny with which she had departed.

"Another luxury to be resigned," thought Ethel, as the girl deftly brushed out her long, abundant hair. "I must soon learn to serve myself."

Lisette could see no pallor now on the cheeks of her young mistress. Excitement had given them a vivid colour, a bloom unusually bright.

"How lovely she is," thought the French girl, as she looked at the glistening chestnut hair, the pure profile, the dark blue eyes and snowy, faultless shoulders.

The dress, too, was perfect, and the maid was more than ever proud of her mistress, whom she regarded somewhat in the light of an artistic creation of her own. A knock on the door, and a servant entered with an exquisite bouquet, saying:

"For Miss Ethel with Mr. Mabury's compliments."

Closer than ever were Lisette's keen eyes fixed on Miss Ethel's face, for the dressing-maid had

certain suspicions of her own, but nothing rewarded her scrutiny.

"You may place it in the vase on the toilet-table, until I am ready," said Miss Wyndham.

But when Ethel herself took up the bouquet before departing, Lisette, catching sight of her in a mirror, saw something in her face that removed all doubt, a passionate, yearning fondness as she caressed the fragrant petals, an expression called forth, perhaps by the flowers, perhaps by the giver.

Certainly that night Mr. Wyndham's wish was fulfilled. His daughter was the gayest of the gay throng, and no one could have guessed at the ruin overshadowing his household. In the conservatory, with Gerard Mabury, she did not blush beneath his eyes, as usual, but looked up and answered his last words with a smile.

"Do not spoil friendship with love-making, it is so pleasant as it is."

"Can we be nothing more to each other than friends, Ethel?"

"Is not that enough? We can be very good friends, can we not?" she said, with her winning smile.

"No," answered the young man; "we must be something more—or less."

For of one thing he was certain: either this girl loved him, or she had trifled with him most heartlessly.

"Gerard," laying her fingers on his arm with a touch that thrilled him—"Gerard, do not be angry with me."

At that moment nature overpowered art in her tone, and he inclined to his first belief.

"Why do you tantalise me so, Ethel?" he said. "I believe you love me."

For one instant the tell-tale blood flushed her cheeks, then she replied, calmly:

"If I do it can make no difference. I cannot marry you, Gerard."

"If we love each other, what can come between us, Ethel?"

His lips were very near hers as he spoke. She grew giddy, the room seemed in a whirl, a confusion of brilliant hues and heavy perfumes. This would never do; with an effort she roused herself, and threw off the arm with which he had encircled her. The dark look returned to his face.

"Gerard," she said, slowly, "believe the best of me. I do not deserve the sentence you have passed on me. I hate deceit and coquetry. But there is a barrier between us, there are reasons I may not tell, why I can never marry you."

"And that barrier," he said, hotly, "is my lack of fortune, my accursed poverty. Wealth must marry wealth. I wish to Heaven my father's failure had made a beggar of me, so I might never have seen you. You are so fond of truth," he added, sneeringly, as Ethel sat in silence, "why do you not tell me it is presumption in me ever to have aspired to you? Heaven knows I had not intended it, but that I fancied you loved me. Truth! you speak of truth! Coquette and deceitful to your heart's core. I thank Heaven I shall go to-morrow where I hope never to look on your false, fair face again!"

Pale and cold she rose up from her seat, checking this wild torrent of words.

"Gerard Mabury, I will not listen to you longer. Some time your words may come back to you with a bitter sting, some time you may change the judgment you have just pronounced."

And before he could reply, she swept haughtily past him. During the remainder of the evening, in the gay waltzes, amid the lights, the music, the hum of surrounding voices, Ethel Wyndham seemed unconscious of the moody, dark eyes that watched her every motion.

Meanwhile, John Somes, during Mabury's monopoly of Ethel, had consoled himself with a pretty little girl. Devoted at first out of pique, she had brought the battery of her charms, her dark eyes and sweet tones, to bear upon him so effectually that he ended by

nearly losing sight of his first motive in seeking her.

Consequently, for the rest of the evening, Ethel saw little of him, though she could easily have brought him back to his allegiance by the slightest exercise of that coquetry which Mabury had ascribed to her. But throughout those gay hours she was sensible only of the dangerous fascination of a certain presence, a fascination intensified by the knowledge that this was their last meeting.

Henceforth their paths must be apart. And Ethel unconsciously photographed on her heart the graceful figure, the haughty bearing, the handsome face with its dark, restless eyes; an image that hereafter, through sunshine or shadow, should remain with her until death.

Late into the next morning Miss Wyndham slept a deep, exhausted sleep, the reaction of a tension of nerve and mind on the preceding evening. The sun had been up for hours when she descended to the breakfast-room; yet, late as was the time, her father's plate lay on the table untouched.

This deviation from his usual business punctuality surprised her somewhat, but supposing that, as was only natural, his disordered affairs might have engrossed his attention to the exclusion of other things, she asked the servant if he had taken no breakfast.

"Sure, Miss Ethel," responded the girl, "he's in his room yet. I knocked at the door, but he didn't answer, and I was afraid to wake him."

Then came to Ethel a sudden fear, against which she vainly reasoned that it was utterly groundless. Possessed with the terrible conviction, she hurried up the stairs to her father's door, where she stood a moment in silence. Then she called him, but at first her frightened irresolute voice refused to sound above a whisper; then louder:

"Father, are you not coming down?" And again, "Father, father!"

But still there was no answer, only her own voice echoing through the passage. She tried the door; it was locked, as she had expected. Then she remembered that the lock of her own room was similar to this. A moment more and she stood again before the door, irresolute, with the key in the lock and her hand on the key.

What terror lurked beyond? What did that familiar room contain to be revealed by the chance opening of the door? Yet what absurd apprehensions were these. Her father, like herself, had retired late—perhaps after spending the night among those endless papers—and now slept as deeply as she herself had done.

With such thoughts she turned the key and opened the door. A faint, sickly-sweet odour pervaded the room and filled the air with languor. The heavy curtains made a half twilight in the apartment, whose occupant was so silent that not a breath stirred the folding drapery of the bed. Deep, indeed, the slumber preserving such deadly stillness.

Ethel stole to the bed and drew aside the curtain, with a face averted and her heart whose pulsations throbbed in her ears. Then she looked down to behold the very sight her fearful fancy had conjured up at first; something lying there, which was and was not her father, which would never speak to her, never look at her more.

Unchanged, save for the stillness of death, he lay before her, his eyes closed, his features at rest, his silvered hair upon the pillow. Almost deceived into hope, she took his hand. Its corpse-like chill terrified her, and, as her own fingers relaxed, it fell again, with a dull, heavy weight, upon the bed.

For a moment everything grew dim and faint, the outlines of the chamber became large and began to fade away, Ethel was losing hold upon consciousness. But now, as on the previous night, strong resolution held in check the overstrained nerves, and she recovered herself, to meet as best she could the blow that had come upon her.

Resolved that the world, which soon must know her father's death and failure, should not gossip idly of his death, her first care was to

remove the tell-tale vial that stood upon the table beside the bed. Next she opened a window, letting in a waft of clear autumn air which bore away all trace of the sweet, poisonous odor. Then, leaving the apartment, she told a servant to send the coachman to her.

"Thomas," she said, as the man came, "get ready the close carriage immediately, and then come to me again."

When he returned she gave him a note, saying:

"You are to go to Mrs. Denalow's. There will be no answer, she will return with you."

About two hours had elapsed when Thomas came with Mrs. Denalow, Ethel's aunt. Although her niece had asked her to come immediately, as something had occurred to require her presence, that lady had not been able to change her customary dilatory manner for even so urgent a request.

Indeed, it is doubtful if she would have come at all during those, for her early hours, had not her curiosity been aroused. As Ethel's nearest relative after her father, although connected not by blood but marriage, she had always exercised a sort of supervision over her niece, acting as chaperone on her entree in society. A worldly fashionable woman, her companionship and ideas were alike distasteful to Ethel, whose confidence she had never possessed.

When the coachman drew up before his master's house, Ethel opened the door herself, thereby slightly shocking Mrs. Denalow's sense of propriety, although she forgave it by attributing it to an eagerness to see her.

"Why, Ethel, is your father here, and ill? I fancied his health was perfect."

But just then something in the still white face revealed the truth, and with a shriek she sank on a chair, giving way to a succession of hysterical sobs. All this Ethel knew must take place before her aunt could recover sufficient composure to speak, and, standing in the window recess, she waited until Mrs. Denalow should regain control over her disordered nerves. To-day, indeed, there was more of genuineness than usual in her tears and sobs, for even her callous nature had received a shock.

"I never heard of anything so dreadful!" she said, as soon as she recovered breath. "How did it happen, Ethel? Had he been ill long?"

"No," was the evasive answer, for Ethel had resolved to reveal not even to her aunt the circumstances of her father's death. "Last night he seemed perfectly well except a headache, and would not hear of my giving up Mrs. Baindlock's party. But this morning, missing him from breakfast, I came up and found him—so."

"Heart disease?" said Mrs. Denalow.

And for a moment another burst of hysterics seemed imminent; but she only drew her lace-edged handkerchief across her eyes as she continued:

"That is it, I have no doubt. My little Clarence, you remember, one night went to bed as usual, and the next morning we found him dead. It is evidently in the family," she ended, with a sigh, entirely losing sight of the fact that her little Clarence had in no wise been related to Richard Wyndham. "What ought we to do, Ethel? I am sure I've no idea. Oh, dear," she continued, plaintively, "why need such a dreadful thing have happened?—not that I wish to rebel against Providence. Have you sent for the doctor yet?"

"No," said Ethel, quickly; "I do not wish for one. There is no necessity."

"Perhaps not," assented her aunt. "But really, Ethel, how can you take this awful blow so calmly? I think if I had been you it would have killed me."

How she ever did live through that terrible week Ethel afterwards wondered. An unnatural strength seemed to support her, not only then, but through the trials that followed. Mr. Wyndham's death and failure soon reached all ears. Death is a great alleviator of men's judgment, but notwithstanding the sad termination of his life, there were not wanting those who accused the merchant of reckless and fraudulent speculations.

Neither the love nor pride of his daughter would allow any ground for such imputations of dishonesty upon her father's name, and she applied to the payment of his debts the fortune which, received from her mother, had been settled on herself. This done, the merest pittance remained to her.

Mrs. Denslow, who in her selfish way was fond of her niece and proud of her beauty, pressed the orphaned girl to make her home with her. But this offer Ethel declined, preferring anything to dependence on her aunt. Thoroughly skilled in music, she resolved now to make the accomplishment a useful one. Thankful enough she was for the talent which, assiduously cultivated and developed, should now save her from want.

Liverpool she had chosen as the scene of her new life, reckoning upon an old friend of her father's residing there for assistance in procuring pupils. Of this, his former intimate friendship with Mr. Wyndham—a friendship unbroken by separation—assured her.

Meantime she had determined to communicate to no one her future place of residence, a plan the more feasible from the fact that Mrs. Denslow, highly indignant at her niece's refusal of her generous invitation, had declared her intention of having nothing more to do with the wayward girl.

As for friends, Ethel thought a little bitterly that among all her gay acquaintances there was not one to whom that title could properly apply with perhaps the exception of John Somes. But she thought it wisest that he should lose sight of her. He would love someone else in time if they ceased to meet, and this would be best, sparing both, as it would, the pain of his rejection.

Opening the lid of her writing-desk the day before her departure, Ethel found a letter with her name upon it in her father's handwriting. With nervous, trembling fingers she broke the seal. The date was that of the never-to-be-forgotten night which ushered in the darkest morning that ever dawned for her. She read the letter lingeringly, tearfully.

It seemed like a message from the dead, the last thing, perhaps, her father had laid his hand upon. That fatal step once decided, it was evident that business cares and earthly matters had lost their interest for him, leaving only the thought of the daughter so dear to him. He had done his best, he wrote, to meet the debts pressing so heavily, and as long as this seemed possible he had resisted the temptations for ever urging him to end his wretched life, but now he saw beyond a doubt that there was no longer a chance of redemption.

Throughout his life two things he had most cherished, her daughter's happiness and his own good name; the ruin of both he could not live to see. Then followed words of love and pity, of hope hereafter, of trust in an infinite mercy, which strengthened Ethel's fainting spirit, as if her dead father had spoken to her thus tenderly. Reverently she refolded the paper and laid it away, with a happier and more submissive heart.

On her arrival in Liverpool Mr. Clifton met her at the station with a cordial welcome, referring to her loss with a considerate kindness that touched her. He insisted that she should go at once to his house, saying that he had promised as much to Mrs. Clifton, who anticipated much pleasure from her friendship. It was hardly possible to demur, so, thanking him, Ethel allowed him to assist her into the carriage that awaited them.

Mrs. Clifton, though her senior by a few years, was more girlish than Ethel in manner and appearance, and so evidently made to pet that it was next to impossible that she should not marry a man much older than herself. On the other hand, Hugh Clifton, with his strength and manliness, was well fitted to protect one by nature so trustful and clinging as his pretty little wife. With their one child, little six-year-old Addie, they led a very happy life together.

Once in the house, Ethel found that there was evidently a preconcerted plan to keep her there. And so urgent were the entreaties of her new

friends, that at last she consented, as a compromise, to remain and instruct little Addie in music.

Other pupils Mr. Clifton procured for her, and as her ability became known, the number increased, until she had quite as much as she could do to attend them. Congenial employment is grief's best panacea, and after a time Ethel's life became peaceful and contented, if not positively happy.

For Mr. Clifton's unceasing endeavours to render her new home a pleasant one she could not feel sufficiently grateful, while as for little Mrs. Nettie, with each day her love for her new friend increased, to such a degree that her husband declared himself jealous of this rival attachment, while Ethel could not help returning the affection of the pretty, warm-hearted creature. At times, however, she found her a sad bar to industry. She was for ever begging her to go walking, or driving, or shopping.

"When Vaughan comes you shall not tie yourself down to that tiresome music," she said one day, as some oft-renewed petition was refused.

Ethel looked up from the piano in surprise. That Vaughan was a cousin of Mrs. Clifton's she knew, having frequently heard his praises sounded by that lady, but that he was coming was information quite unexpected. At her glance of inquiry, Nettie arched her head on one side, like a little bird.

"See," she said, holding up her hand and displaying an open letter therein. "I'm wild with delight! He promises to give us three whole weeks. Don't he write a beautiful hand?"

Ethel looked at the letter. She was rather interested in this Cousin Vaughan, of whom she had heard so much.

"Do you believe the handwriting is a true test of character?"

"Not always," answered Ethel, smiling. "I have known it to fail sadly."

"What should you say of Vaughan, judging by his writing? I would so like to hear your opinion of him."

Ethel looked at the elegant, flowing chirography, then replied:

"He is refined—that is all I can tell."

"Ah, well," laughed Nettie, "you will learn all the rest. Meantime, mayn't he know you by your true name?" for she had taken her mother's name—Ethel Ayrault.

A sadness came over the beautiful face as she answered, in a low voice:

"Nettie, dear, please do not ask it. I have laid that name aside with my old life."

"Never mind, dear," said Mrs. Clifton, kissing her. "Of course it will make no difference; I will call you Miss Ayrault if you wish it. And now come and drive, won't you? The day is so beautiful!"

"No, thank you, the tiresome music must be attended to," replied Ethel, with an attempt at gaiety.

But Mrs. Clifton could see that her speech had recalled old memories she wished her to forget, and full of regret for her thoughtlessness, she withdrew from her presence. And Ethel, left alone, found it hard enough to concentrate her thoughts on the measures her hands ran through. "Miss Wyndham!"

She said the name over to herself, almost starting at the sound. Three years had passed since last she heard it; years so different from all the rest of her life that she seemed never to have been the gay heiress, the fashionable belle.

This was a truer life she was leading now, quiet and peaceful. Spite of Mrs. Clifton's remonstrances, she could be induced to see no society, what formerly gave her so much delight being most distasteful to her at present. That she was more beautiful than ever she could not fail to see, even had not Mrs. Clifton's loving admiration assured her of it, but, disarding all the old adornments, she wore only simple black.

She wondered sometimes how she could have given so much thought to dress; it seemed to unimportant a matter now. One thing troubled

her in the prospect of this new arrival. She could not help seeing that Mrs. Clifton had formed plans of her own in regard to her favourite cousin and dearest friend. The secret of her love Ethel had guarded jealously, like that other dread one which she dared not name even in her thoughts.

For her father's death she could be pitied, but this grief she must bear alone. Often did she think of the past, of the scene in the conservatory on that fateful night, of Gerald Mabury's dark, moody gaze following her through the evening. She had heard no word of him since.

Where was he now? Had he forgotten her? Should they ever meet again? Perhaps he was married—and she strove to still the quick pang that arose at the thought of how completely their lives had drifted apart. And trying to banish all these memories, she returned to her music once more.

A few nights after she sat in the library, watching thoughtfully the play of shadows chasing each other over the glowing coals, dreamily conscious, the while, of the contrast between the cold wind without and the curtain comfort within, when the sound of merry voices aroused her from her reverie. Addie was dancing around someone in the hall, while Mrs. Clifton was laughing and talking, and apparently greeting the new-comer, all in a breath.

This someone was Cousin Vaughan, she had no doubt, and the knowledge of his arrival jarred unpleasantly on her thoughts. Nevertheless, since there was no alternative, she resigned herself to the inevitable prospect. At which moment the door opened, and admitted the object of her thoughts; at least, so she supposed. Of Nettie she was certain, but the tall form behind her was in deep shadow.

"Why, here she is!" cried Mrs. Clifton; "Mr. Mabury, Miss Ayrault. I was just speaking of you, Ethel, just telling him what a dear friend—Why, Ethel, darling, what is the matter? How thoughtless of me to startle you so."

For Ethel was pale as death, and Mabury's face, too, wore a strange expression. Perhaps he also was startled at this sudden apparition, with such vivid contrasts of white face and black dress, without a gleam of colour except in the bright hair. This was true of her but a moment, however, for back into the pale cheeks the crimson tide came with a rush that tingled hotly. For Ethel Ayrault had not quite Miss Wyndham's self-possession, and, for a moment, could scarcely reply to the greeting of Nettie Clifton's cousin.

This pallor and hesitation had startled Mrs. Clifton at first, but Ethel soon recovered herself. After a little, saying something about trying to rest to cure her violent headache, she left the room, declining her friend's offer of assistance.

"Isn't she lovely, Vaughan?" asked the latter, almost before the door had closed. "Did I say a word too much?"

"Hardly enough," he answered, quietly.

"Now it is too bad!" she exclaimed, in disappointment. "I expected you to be more enthusiastic. Everyone is that catches a glimpse of her. What is the good of going to Italy to see the beautiful, if one can't appreciate it at home?"

"You have enthusiasm enough for both, my excitable little cousin."

"Ah, well, you will know her in time, that is a consolation. I must tell you that I am in love with her," she continued, confidently. "Hugh says I have a perfect monomania, Ethel-on-the-brain, but he really thinks as much of her as I do."

"Perhaps I had better go at once. Rather a dangerous vicinity, it seems."

"Well, you may be sceptical now, but it is, I assure you."

Sceptical! Gerard Mabury had travelled over land and sea to forget that beautiful face which made all art seem a mockery. But, on sea or land, the blue eyes haunted him, the sweet voice lingered in his memory; and now, as fate would

have it, he came home to meet the very danger he had sought to shun. But this danger he would avoid no longer.

The news of her father's death, happening on the very morning of his departure for America, by some chance did not reach him until, after a three-years' absence, he returned to London. To this arrival he had looked forward with mingled emotions. He should see Ethel again, but as the wife of another, probably; perhaps his old rival, John Somes. How could he bear it? If she had only waited! For, by the death of a wealthy relative, he now had riches in abundance.

But she had doubtless sold herself ere this, loving him through all, he knew. Then came the remembrance of those last words of hers, whose meaning had so often perplexed him. Sometimes he would change his judgment; sometimes his words would come back to him with a bitter sting. When he saw her the wife of the millionaire, admired and flattered by all, then he would regret his presumption? Was that her meaning, he asked himself, fiercely, the old jealousy uppermost in his heart.

Then he learned the events that had transpired during his absence; Mr. Wyndham's failure and death, his daughter's sacrifice of her fortune, and lastly, her disappearance. The news awoke blended feelings of relief and remorse; relief that she was free, remorse for her possible suffering and his own hasty pride which had left her to bear them alone. But he was resolved that, however remote her hiding-place, he would find her and restore her to the wealth and luxury that were hers by right.

When this visit to his cousin should be over—already in his determination abridged to half its length—he would seek out his Ethel, his darling. Thus, throughout all his journey, he mused, his mind busy with a thousand half-formed plans, until the glad greeting of his cousin brought him back to himself.

And how was it with Ethel, when, the first overwhelming sensation of their meeting past, she was once more at liberty to think? All that evening she was in a flutter of excitement, hardly knowing whether it was joy or pain. The old-time inquiet filled her mind, and long dormant feelings, over which she had gained a fancied control, rose up to terrify her with their giant might. She felt again the hopes, the fears, the doubts of love.

The momentary unsteadiness of voice, the dark flush that passed over his cheek on beholding her—above all, a something in his eyes, one moment convinced her that he remained unchanged, but the next she remembered that so unexpected a meeting might occasion some natural embarrassment. She longed to flee from the constant trial awaiting her self-possession, but escape was impossible, and she could only pray for strength to bear it.

And the prayer was granted. Refreshed by sleep, she arose ashamed of her former cowardice, determined to set about her duties as usual, let come what might. But she needed the strongest resolution, at times, to keep down the tell-tale blood, the fluttering heart-beats; for, on one pretext or another, Mrs. Clifton was always leaving her alone with Mabury. The latter, meantime, at a loss to know if she loved him still, was going through with very much the same course of reasoning as her own, with this difference, however, that it invariably ended in a vow that she should marry him.

One evening, during a short absence of Mr. Clifton, Nettie and Gerard were to attend a party, to which, as usual, Ethel had refused to go, despite much urging. After they had, as she supposed, departed, she went to the library, intending to pass the evening in reading. She had not been there long before Gerard Mabury entered. Starting a little as she saw who had come, she exclaimed:

"Why, Mr. Mabury, I thought you had gone with Nettie!"

"No," he answered, throwing himself on a lounge, "I excused myself on the plea of one of your headaches, Miss Ethel."

Nothing more was said for a while. Presently he continued:

"That must be an interesting book; you have been reading the same page ever since I came in. Don't you want me to come and turn the leaf for you?"

Ethel smiled.

"I confess I was thinking of something else," she said, laying down the book.

"Of past, present, or future?"

"The past, I believe."

"Do you remember Miss Revere? She is Mrs. Somes now," spoken carelessly, but watching her jealously the while under his long lashes.

"Indeed?" she said, with equal carelessness. "She was very pretty, I remember."

"Yes," he answered; then, coming nearer, "Ethel, do you remember our last meeting, also?"

She dared not look up.

"Yes," she said.

"You remember what you answered me to my last remark?"

No reply, but the drooping lashes fell on cheeks whose colour told a secret the shaded eye would fain conceal. He took her unresisting hand in his, saying:

"The only barrier that can exist between us now is gone?"

"Yes, Gerard," she whispered.

Hugh Clifton, unexpectedly returned, opened the door a few moments later.

"Tableaux vivants, upon my word! Allow me to offer my congratulations." K. P.

#### PRIDE'S FALL.

ONCE on a time, at eventide,

Two laden horses stood,

Hard by the gloomy entrance

Of a dense and trackless wood.

One bore heavy sacks of grain;

The other, proud and bold,

Pranced 'neath the light, but rarer

load,

Of jewels and of gold.

"My friend," said this one, with a

sneer,

"How better 'tis to be

The bearer of uncounted wealth

Than of a miller's fee!

Upon my back I proudly bear

A rich man's priceless hoard,

To be ere long in gilded halls

Beyond the forest stored.

Thy burden is a donkey's load,

Coarse sacks of wheat and corn:

A well-bred steed like me, my friend,

Would cast it off in scorn."

"Thy burden," said the humble one,

"Is richer far than mine;

Yet I'm as proud to carry it

As thou to carry thine.

Proud that in what I have to do,

Whate'er the task may be,

I'll gladly duty's call obey,

And do it faithfully."

Anon they pass within the wood,

But ere the bound they gain,

A band of robbers seize them both,

They struggle—but in vain.

"What have we here?" the leader

cries;

"This corn we do not need—

But this! my men, here's wealth

enough

To sate a miser's greed."

They bid the miller's horse depart,

The rich man's steed they hold;

And by the light of torch divide

His jewels and his gold.

#### MORAL.

We all have reason, in life's course,

In sorrow to confess

The object of our pride is oft

The cause of our distress.

G. B.

#### HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

**RHUBARB JELLY.**—Take some rhubarb, wipe it with a clean wet cloth, peel it, and cut it into pieces an inch long. To each pound of rhubarb add three-fourths pound white sugar. Put it to boil for about ten minutes, or until the juice is well drawn. Strain it into a preserving pan, let it boil quickly until it clings to the spoon, skim it, and put it into jam pots or moulds. The quickest way to know if it will set is to drop a little on a plate to cool.

**LEMON GINGER CAKE.**—Quarter pound of butter, one-half pound of sugar, three eggs, one small cup of milk, the same quantity of molasses, three and a quarter pounds of flour, teaspoonful of ginger, one of cinnamon, one tablespoonful of saleratus dissolved in the milk, the rind of two lemons and the juice of one. Bake in a quick oven.

**CITRON CAKE.**—(How to keep the citron from falling to the bottom of the cake.) One cup of butter, two of sugar, three of flour, four eggs, and one cup of milk; add one teaspoonful of soda and two of cream of tartar, and one pinch of salt. Make the cake as above, put in the pan, cut the citron thin, put it in the cake endwise, push down till the batter covers citron.

**UNION CAKE.**—Two cups sugar, one-half cup butter, three-fourths cup of sweet milk, three cups flour, whites of six eggs, one-half teaspoonful of soda and one teaspoonful of cream of tartar. Custard for the layers—One pint milk, one-half cup of sugar, two eggs, two tablespoonfuls corn starch; boil until like thick cream, and spread between the layers when cool. Flavour to taste.

**SODA BREAD.**—Mix thoroughly equal parts of tartaric acid and carbonate of soda, and put the mixture aside to be used as required. Dissolve a tea-spoonful of the powder and a pinch of salt in a breakfast-cupful of milk, and stir the liquor into a pound of flour. Knead the dough till it is smooth and light, put it into a tin, and bake the loaf in a brisk oven. Sometimes sour milk or buttermilk is used instead of sweet milk, and then a smaller proportion of tartaric acid is required. Time to bake about an hour. Probable cost, 3d. for a loaf this size.

#### MISCELLANEOUS.

THE London Young Men's Christian Association has purchased Exeter Hall for the sum of £25,000, and a further outlay of £15,000 will be made in adapting it to the requirements of a Central Association, for which it is to be used.

AN heroic and noble Bostonian's first thought when his home took fire recently was for his mother-in-law, whom he saved from a burning staircase by promptly throwing her from a three-storey window.

ASTRONOMERS say that the planet Neptune is so far from the earth that if Adam and Eve had from the first day of their existence started on a railroad train and travelled steadily day and night, at the rate of thirty miles an hour, towards Neptune, they would by this time have traversed little more than half the distance to the vaporous orb. The human race is, therefore, to be congratulated upon the fact that Adam and Eve did not undertake any such foolish trip.

**APPLES.**—It is stated that by a careful analysis it has been found that apples contain a larger amount of phosphorus, or brain food, than any other fruit or vegetable, and so on this account they are very important to sedentary men, who work with their brain rather than muscles. They contain the acids which are needed every day, especially for the sedentary, the action of whose liver is sluggish, to eliminate effete matters, which, if retained in the system, produce inaction of the brain, and indeed of the whole system, causing jaundice, sleeplessness, scurvy, troublesome diseases of the skin, &c.

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## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

LUCY B.—1. The colour of the hair tied with red is black; the other auburn. 2. We make no charge for answering questions.

A. E. H.—The mother is entitled to the care of the child until it is five years old. The father can then claim the child unless you are able to show very strong reasons to the contrary.

CONSTANCE.—Try Mrs. Allen's Tylo-Balsam. It is a cooling, transparent liquid, and a most useful item for the toilet table.

TRAINER SUBSCRIBER.—1. All depilatories are more or less dangerous; the safest way to darken the eyebrows is to use brown cosmetic. 2. Wash the hands in water in which fuller's earth or oatmeal has been infused. Wear gloves in the street.

MAUD.—Unless you have other facts than those you have sent us upon which to base your claim little is likely to come of it.

MATILDA.—If your uncle died intestate, leaving no widow or children, his property is divided equally among his brothers and sisters. If either of the latter are dead the children are heirs to the share their father or mother would have received if he or she had been alive.

PUBLICO.—Do not believe it. A man without money is certainly poor, but a man with nothing but money is still poorer. Worldly gifts cannot bear up the spirits from fainting and sighing when trials and troubles come any more than headache can be cured by a golden crown, or toothache by a chain of pearls. Earthly riches are full of real poverty.

W. R. G.—Directly at the equator the days and nights are always the same length. As you advance north or south the length of the days and nights change about five minutes to a degree.

ATHLETE.—There are so many books on the subject of athletic sports that but little new can be said about them.

MADELINE.—It is not considered proper for two ladies to attend the theatre or opera without an escort. A polite hostess will ask her guests to change places with her in order to sit by others, and also see that each person has a chance to converse with others, and to tend to the entertainment and amusement of all others.

JESSIE.—The aim that young ladies should have in view with regard to their dress is neatness and simplicity. It is on this account that the French are so justly famous for their good taste. To be well-dressed does not depend on a lavish expenditure of money, but on the selection of suitable colours which harmonise with the complexion. Be suitably attired for the occasion, for the weather, and time of day.

CHARLIE.—It is very discouraging to a young man who is in love to be debarred from visiting his lady-love except at the risk of being "thrown out of the house" by a big brother. Unless you are able to cope successfully with him in the throwing-out process, your course of true love will not run very smooth. Can't you use a little strategy? Suppose, for instance, you get some friend to quietly inform him that you are a terrible fellow when you are excited; or, better still, try and mollify him by giving him a cigar now and then. That works wonders sometimes when judiciously administered.

A. W. G.—Caoutchouc, or India rubber, is the milky juice of a number of trees found in Mexico, Central and South America, and in the East Indies. The tree is tapped in the morning, and during the day a gill of fluid is received in a clay cup placed at each incision in the trunk. This is turned into a jar, and is ready at once to be poured over any pattern of clay, the form of which it takes as successive layers are thus applied. Its drying and hardening are hastened by exposure to the smoke and heat of a fire, and thus the substance acquires its ordinary black colour. Dried by the sun alone, it is white within and yellowish brown without. When pure it is nearly colourless. Complete drying requires several days' exposure to the sun. During this time the substance is soft enough to receive impressions with a stick, and is thus ornamented with various designs. The natives collect it upon balls of clay in the shape of bottles and various fanciful figures, in which shape it is often exported.

LIEBIE, twenty-one, dark, good-tempered, and fond of music, would like to correspond with a gentleman in a good position. Respondent must be about twenty-four, tall, fair, good-looking, loving.

NELLY and ALICE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men. Nelly is eighteen, fair, good-looking, tall. Alice is seventeen, medium height, fond of home. Respondents must be tall, dark, fond of music and dancing.

A. C. and FLORA, two friends, would like to correspond with two tall, dark gentlemen. A. C. is eighteen, good-looking, hazel eyes. Flora is seventeen, medium height, good-tempered.

HERBERT and FRED, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. Herbert is twenty-one, dark, fond of home and children. Fred is twenty-two, fair, of a loving disposition, fond of dancing.

FLYING BOOM and FORT ROYAL YARD, two seamen in the Royal Navy, wish to correspond with two young ladies. Flying Boom is twenty-three, light curly hair, blue eyes, medium height, fair, of a loving disposition, fond of children. Fort Royal Yard is twenty-two, fair, light brown hair, hazel eyes, medium height. Respondents must be dark, good-looking, fond of children, and of medium height.

TOR MASTER, a seaman in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with a young lady who is fond of home and music. He is dark, hazel eyes, medium height, good-looking, tall.

PINAFORE COLLAR, twenty-four, a seaman in the Royal Navy, light brown hair, blue eyes, medium height, and good-looking, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony.

## THE IRON BELT.

'Tis chronicled of Scotland's crown  
That one who wore it, long ago,  
Was day by day home, wasting, down,  
By some mysterious pang or woe  
Which leech and priest alike defied,  
And few thereof the cause had guessed,  
Till, all outworn, at last he died,  
And then the secret stood confessed.

Under his vestments, next the flesh,  
An iron belt was tightly bound,  
Unto whose weight each year afresh  
Had been affixed another pound,  
As expiation, self-imposed,  
For brother's blood in anger shed,  
Ere yet the sign of empire closed  
Its circle round his youthful head.

The royal armourer alone,  
And one, a page, to silence sworn,  
Had of this pact with Conscience known,  
Or when the baldric first was worn.  
'Neath courtly silk and warrior mail,  
Asleep, away had gone the shield,  
With torturing link and festering mail  
It clasped him close, and racked and gnawed.

And thus a suffering lifetime through,  
And oft beneath a smiling lip  
The self-inflicted penance grew  
Still heavier with its iron grip,  
Till death at last unclasped the bond  
With pitying hand, and let us deem,  
The kingly expiation found  
Acceptance with the Blessed Supreme.

Such is the chronicle, and oft  
It comes to mind what time I feel  
That many an outer seeming soft  
May unsuspected pangs conceal—  
A penance done with bated breath,  
An iron belt that gnaws and rends  
For wrongs committed, till with Death  
The wearied Conscience makes amends.

N. D. U

ANNIE LACHIE, nineteen, medium height, brown hair and eyes, fond of music and dancing, would like to correspond with a gentleman about twenty-two, fond of home, tall.

NINA and AMELIA, two friends, would like to correspond with two gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Nina is twenty-one, dark hair, hazel eyes. Amelia is eighteen, good-looking, tall, fair, blue eyes. Respondents must be nineteen and twenty-two, dark, good-looking, fond of home.

HELEN and EDITH, cousins, would like to correspond with two tradesmen. Helen is sixteen, fair, hazel eyes, medium height, fond of music. Edith is seventeen, fond of home and children, fair, blue eyes.

ISABELLA and ANNA, two friends, would like to correspond with two seamen in the Royal Navy. Isabella is tall, dark, of a loving disposition. Anna is tall, fair, fond of home and music.

PINAFORE HAT and UNIFORM BOW, two seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with two young ladies with a view to matrimony. Pinafore Hat is twenty-three, dark, hazel eyes, medium height. Uniform Bow is twenty-three, fair, medium height, fond of home and dancing.

EVE and ALICE, two friends, wish to correspond with two gentlemen. Eve is fair, medium height, blue eyes. Alice is seventeen, tall, dark. Respondents must be tall, good-looking.

FIRST WATCH and HOUR WHEEL, two seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with two young ladies. First Watch is dark, of a loving disposition, fond of home and music. Hour Wheel is fair, medium height, fond of music and dancing.

CECIL, forty-five, steady, would like to correspond with a lady with a view to matrimony.

CLARE and JANE, two friends, would like to correspond with two gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Clare is twenty-two, fond of dancing, dark. Jane is twenty, good-tempered, fair, and fond of music and dancing, brown hair.

AGNES and ALICE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men with a view to matrimony. Agnes is nineteen, tall, dark, good-looking. Alice is twenty-one, of a loving disposition, good-looking, and thoroughly domesticated. Respondents must be tall, dark, and good-looking.

G. M., twenty-two, auburn hair, fair, medium height, good-looking, a seaman in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony about nineteen.

PHIL, twenty-three, of a loving disposition, fond of children, would like to correspond with a young lady or widow.

CLARA and FANNY, two friends, would like to correspond with two gentlemen in good positions. Clara is nineteen, fair, of a loving disposition, fond of home. Fanny is eighteen, fond of music, auburn hair, loving. Respondents must be about twenty-two, dark, tall, and good-looking.

TILLY, seventeen, black eyes, fond of home, dark, domesticated, would like to correspond with a seaman in the Royal Navy about the same age.

MUSIC, twenty-seven, medium height, good-looking, would like to correspond with a young lady about twenty, fond of music and dancing.

A. M. and T. C., two friends, would like to correspond with two young men. A. M. is tall, dark hair, grey eyes, good-looking, fair. T. C. is dark, medium height, good-looking.

NETTIE and LILLIE, two friends, would like to correspond with two seamen in the Royal Navy. Nettie is eighteen, medium height, brown hair, blue eyes. Lillie is twenty, of a loving disposition, brown hair, blue eyes, domesticated.

GERTRUDE and GERALDINE, two friends, wish to correspond with two gentlemen. Gertrude is seventeen, brown hair, hazel eyes, medium height, fair, fond of home and children. Geraldine is nineteen, dark hair, blue eyes, tall, thoroughly domesticated. Respondents must be twenty, tall, dark.

BECKY, CARRIE, and LIZZIE, three friends, would like to correspond with three young men. Becky is twenty-two, tall, dark, fond of dancing. Carrie is twenty, fair, medium height, fond of children. Lizzie is seventeen, tall, fair, of a loving disposition.

## COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

LOW DIET is responded to by—Ethel, twenty, tall, fair, fond of home.

EXPECTING FULL by—Edith, twenty-two, fair, fond of home and music.

HARRY by—Maud, good-looking, dark brown hair, hazel eyes.

THESE by—Traps, tall, fair, fond of home, music, and dancing.

JOE by—Emma.

JACK by—Henriette, medium height, fair, light hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children.

TED by—Annie, fair, hazel eyes, of a loving disposition, thoroughly domesticated.

AMY by—Alexander, medium height, dark, fond of music.

BERTIE by—Nicholas, fair, fond of music and dancing, medium height.

EVE by—Handy Bill, tall, dark, fond of home.

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